



Council

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council to be held at **6.00 p.m. on Monday, 18 March 2024** in the Assembly Room, within the Town Hall, Birkenhead, to take into consideration and determine the following subjects:

Contact Officer: Anna Perrett
Tel: 0151 666 3791
e-mail: annaperrett@wirral.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

Please note that public seating is limited, therefore members of the public are encouraged to arrive in good time.

Wirral Council is fully committed to equalities and our obligations under The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. If you have any adjustments that would help you attend or participate at this meeting, please let us know as soon as possible and we would be happy to facilitate where possible. Please contact committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk

This meeting will be webcast at
<https://wirral.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

AGENDA

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Council are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest, in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

2. CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive the Civic Mayor's announcements and any apologies for absence.

3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 36)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting(s) of the Council held on 4 December 2023 and 26 February 2024

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

To deal with questions, statements and petitions from members of the public, and Members, in accordance with Standing Orders 10, 11 and 12.

A. Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, 13 March 2024 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (via the online form here: [Public Question Form](#)) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

For more information on how your personal information will be used, please see this link: [Document Data Protection Protocol](#)

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question by the deadline for submission.

B. Statements and Petitions

Notice of statements to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, 13 March 2024 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

Petitions may be presented to the Council if provided to Democratic and Member Services no later than 10 working days before the meeting, at the discretion of the Mayor. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding three minutes) to outline the aims of the petition. The Mayor will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. If a petition contains more than 5,000 signatures, it will be debated at a subsequent meeting of Council for up to 15 minutes, at the discretion of the Mayor. Please give notice of petitions to committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your statement/petition by the deadline for submission.

C. Members' Questions

To consider Members' questions to the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, Committee Chair or a Leader of a

Political Group, in accordance with Standing Orders 12.

5. MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

To consider any recommendations and receive reports from the Council's Committees which require the approval or consideration of the Council, and to receive questions and answers on any of those reports.

**A. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25 AND 2025/26
(Pages 37-67)**

Council is requested to agree to the following recommendation of the Constitution and Standards Committee held on 28 February 2024:

That Council be recommended to approve, subject to an amendment by the Director of Law and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons in regard to the sequence of July meetings:

1. the revised Calendar of Meetings 2024/25,
2. the Calendar of Meetings 2025/26

Minute Extract and Report are attached.

B. ARMC ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23 (67 -93)

Council is requested to agree to the following recommendation of the Audit and Risk Management Committee held on 15 January 2024:

To approval the Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report 22-23.

Minute Extract and Report are attached.

6. REPORTS AND DECISIONS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

To receive reports about and receive questions and answers on decisions made by Committees since the last meeting of Council.

Members' attention is drawn to one Committee decision which has been taken and excluded from removal of delegation and reconsideration by Policy & Resources Committee and is reported to the Council in accordance with Part 4, Section 4, paragraph 6(a)(ii) of

the Constitution.

[Utilisation of procure partnerships and Pagoba frameworks.](#)

Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee - 22 January 2024

**A. DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING
(Pages 95 – 228)**

The minutes of all committees which have met since 11 November 2023, up until 27 February 2024 are attached below.

Minutes of Committees:

21.11.23 Policy & Resources Committee

23.11.23 Regulatory & General Purposes Committee

28.11.23 Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee

29.11.23 Children Young People & Education Committee

30.11.23 Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee

05.12.23 Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee

06.12.23 Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee

07.12.23 Health & Wellbeing Board

11.12.23 Pensions Committee

12.12.23 Audit & Risk Management Committee

13.12.23 Policy & Resources Committee

11.01.24 Planning Committee

15.01.24 Audit & Risk Management Committee

17.01.24 Policy & Resources Committee

22.01.24 Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee

23.01.24 Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee

25.01.24 Tourism, Communities Culture & Leisure Committee

29.01.24 Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee

31.01.24 Regulatory & General Purposes Committee

01.02.24 Children, Young People & Education Committee

08.02.24 Planning Committee

13.02.24 Policy & Resources Committee

B. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

To receive questions and answers to representatives on Joint Authorities on matters which fall within the responsibility of the relevant Joint Authority, to be received in accordance with Standing Order 12.4.

These include:

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee

7. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (Pages 229 - 238)

Motions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.1, are attached. They are listed in accordance with Standing Order 13.2, and the full text of each motion is attached.

Full Council Responsibility for Functions

The full responsibility of functions for Full Council can be found at the end of this agenda.



Paul Satoor, Chief Executive

TIMINGS AND GUILLOTINE

Members are reminded of the following:

Item 2 - under Standing Order 2(iv) Mayor's announcements normally limited to up to 5 minutes.

Item 4A. – under Standing Order 10.7, public questions, up to 2 minutes allowed to put a question and up to 2 minutes for a response. Up to 30 minutes in total allowed for public questions (Standing Order 2(v)).

Item 4B. - under Standing Order 11.1, representations (statements) up to 3 minutes, with public speaking on any one item not exceeding 10 minutes. Up to 20 minutes in total allowed to receive representations (Standing Order 2(vi)).
Petitions – under Standing Order 11.2, present and speak to a petition for up to 1 minute.

Item 4C. – under Standing Order 12.8, questions on notice from Members will not exceed 1 minute and up to 2 minutes for a response.

Item 6 – under Standing Order 2(xii) the total time allowed for questions and answers on decisions of committees is up to 45 minute.

Under Standing Order 9 of the Council Procedure Rules:

The Mayor will adjourn the meeting for a period of ten minutes at a convenient time after one and a half hours.

Where three hours have elapsed after the commencement of any meeting (and in the case of an extraordinary meeting of Council when two hours have elapsed since commencement of the meeting) the Mayor shall interrupt the meeting and the Member speaking must immediately cease doing so and sit down. The meeting shall then dispose of the item then under consideration as if the motion '*That the question be now put*' had been carried (i.e. the debate shall be concluded by the seconder and by the Member who has the right of reply and the vote will then be taken without any further discussion). This rule will not apply to meetings of a quasi-judicial or regulatory nature.

Audio/Visual Recording of Meetings

Everyone is welcome to record meetings of the Council and its Committees using non-disruptive methods. For particular meetings we may identify a 'designated area' for you to record from. If you have any questions about this please contact Committee and Civic Services (members of the press please contact the Press Office). Please note that the Chair of the meeting has the discretion to halt any recording for a number of reasons, including disruption caused by the filming or the nature of the business being conducted.

Persons making recordings are requested not to put undue restrictions on the material produced so that it can be reused and edited by all local people and organisations on a non-commercial basis.

COUNCIL

Monday, 4 December 2023

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Jerry Williams) in the Chair

Councillors	A Ainsworth	N Graham	J McManus
	C Baldwin	JE Green	R Molyneux
	P Basnett	EA Grey	S Mountney
	G Bennett	J Grier	K Murphy
	S Bennett	A Hodson	T Murphy
	J Bird	K Hodson	A Onwuemene
	M Booth	P Jobson	R Pitt
	A Brame	G Jenkinson	S Powell-Wilde
	H Cameron	J Johnson	H Raymond
	C Carubia	M Jordan	L Rennie
	P Cleary	S Kelly	M Redfern
	C Cooke	B Kenny	M Skillicorn
	T Cox	J Stewart Laing	K Stuart
	A Davies	T Laing	P Stuart
	GJ Davies	E Lamb	M Sullivan
	G Davies	I Lewis	E Tomeny
	S Foulkes	L Luxon-Kewley	J Walsh
	A Gardner	P Martin	J Williamson
	P Gilchrist	C McDonald	V Wilson
	H Gorman	G McManus	

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Janette Williamson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in motion 1 'Maximising Income from Benefits and Allowances to Help Alleviate Poverty in Wirral' due to her employment with the Department for Work and Pensions. Councillor Williamson intimated she would leave the room during the deliberation of the item.

Councillor Ian Lewis declared a personal interest in motion 1 'Maximising Income from Benefits and Allowances to Help Alleviate Poverty in Wirral' as a trustee of the Number Seven social supermarket.

60 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Brenda Hall, Tony Jones, Daisy Kenny, Cherry Povall, Jean Robinson and Gill Wood.

The Civic Mayor announced that he had undertaken almost 40 civic events since the previous Council meeting, which had included several remembrance events and visiting a war veteran on his 105th birthday. The Civic Mayor had also attended several Christmas light switch-ons, and thanked Council staff for accompanying him on the Liverpool Santa Dash to raise money for the Mayor's Charity.

61 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 9 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

62 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Mayor informed Council that four questions had been received.

Alan Featherstone asked a question to Councillor Tony Cox as Chair of Constitution and Standards Committee on behalf of The Big Flower Shop asking the Council to approve formal guidance giving public questioners the right to submit support documents for public questions and the right to ask a question on someone else's behalf if they have authority.

In response, Councillor Cox outlined that the Constitution requires a public question to be submitted 3 working days before a meeting and it was his view that if supporting documents were submitted within this timeframe, they would likely be accepted by the Chair and circulated to members. Councillor Cox also responded that the Constitution specifies that in the absence of a questioner, the Chair would read out the question, and that the Constitution and Standards Committee was content for this discretion afforded to Chairs to remain.

Alan Featherstone asked as a supplementary question whether the Council would consider providing answers to public questions 24 hours in advance. In response, Councillor Cox felt it could undermine the asking of questions in person, and that any question not answered on the night would be provided in writing.

Alan Featherstone asked a second question to Councillor Tony Cox as Chair of Constitution and Standards Committee on behalf of The Big Flower Shop asking who was responsible for the accuracy of responses to public questions.

In response, Councillor Cox outlined that whilst the Councillor responding would rely on information provided by officers, the Councillor responding to the question was ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the response. Councillor Cox referred Mr Featherstone to the complaints procedure if he felt that incorrect information had been provided in response to a public question.

Alan Featherstone asked as a supplementary question whether the response should name the officer who provided the information. In response, Councillor Cox reinforced that the accountable person was the elected member and again referred Mr Featherstone to the complaint procedure if there were particular issues he had.

Julian Priest asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council outlining issues with the MyWirral system closing cases immediately with seemingly no action being taken and no responses to emails, and sought assurances from the Leader that the system was managed and monitored.

In response, Councillor Stuart advised that the email account that sent notifications was a no reply account. Councillor Stuart also outlined that the automatic case closed messages had been discontinued and replaced with a requirement for officers to provide a detailed update on the case and if work could not be undertaken, providing a reason why.

Julian Priest asked a supplementary question outlining that he had not been given contact details for officers and therefore if no action is taken, how could a resident contact the person taking responsibility for the case. In response, Councillor Stuart undertook to determine from officers whether there was an escalation process and would provide a response in writing.

Jane Turner asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council detailing the impact of increased cost of living on residents in Wirral and provided the evidence of this collected by Citizens Advice Wirral. Jane asked whether Councillors would undertake to read the live dashboard provided and work together with the third sector to support those who were in critical need in the Borough.

In response, Councillor Stuart detailed the stark picture that the data painted and thanked Citizens Advice for the work they do. Councillor Stuart shared the concerns raised in the question and outlined the work ongoing at the Council including commissioning a new Information and Advice contract and that further updates on the progress to tackle the impact of increased cost of living were due at Health and Wellbeing Board later that week.

Jane Turner asked a supplementary question which outlined that St Helen's Council and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority had signed up to work with Policy in Practice and asked whether the Leader would consider working with those authorities. In response, Councillor Stuart undertook to discuss this with St Helen's and the Combined Authority.

Alan Featherstone made a statement in relation to agenda item 5(a) New Council Plan which welcomed the introduction of the Plan as a way to make a difference to the community. He called upon Councillors to ensure that the plan was delivered, particularly in the context of the impact on Birkenhead Market.

Greg McTigue made a statement on behalf of Birkenhead Market Tenants' Association in relation to agenda item 5(b) 2023/24 Capital Monitoring Q2, calling on the Council to fulfil its promise to establish a new flagship market in Birkenhead. It was outlined that there had been many delays and setbacks to the delivery of a new market and the Birkenhead Market Tenants' Association were disappointed with the current proposals.

Councillor Mark Skillicorn submitted a petition of 350 signatures regarding the closure of Boots Chemist in Greasby. Councillor Skillicorn outlined that almost 10,000 residents in Greasby needed this lifeline as it is the only Boots Pharmacy for several miles and many residents in the area depended on it, and called on the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to write to Boots.

Councillor Graham Davies submitted a petition of approximately 7,073 signatures regarding the closure of car parks in Heswall. Councillor Davies outlined that Heswall was designated a town of growth and redevelopment but taking its car parks away didn't fit with that, with residents and businesses overwhelmingly against any closures.

Councillor Julie McManus submitted a petition of over 700 signatures calling on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to not withdraw the 418 bus service. Councillor McManus outlined the previous reduction in frequency of the service and the impact on any reduction on those who need the service, including those visiting loved ones in Arrowe Park hospital.

Dave Pearson submitted a petition of over 7,000 signatures on behalf of Alan Jones, calling on the Council to reconsider the rollout of 20mph zones. Mr Pearson outlined concerns with the scheme including lack of evidence-based decision making, inefficient use of resources, diverting police resources and disruption on emergency service response time. Mr Pearson urged the Council to consider alternative solutions.

As the petition submitted in relation to 20mph zones had over 5,000 signatures, in accordance with Standing Order 11.2, the petition was debated for 15 minutes.

64 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Mayor reported that 8 questions by members had been submitted.

Councillor Pat Cleary asked a question to Councillor Jenny Johnson as Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee regarding the exercise being undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of programme governance within the regeneration progress, and sought an update on when it would be reported back to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

In response, Councillor Johnson outlined that it was a substantial piece of work that was ongoing and the Committee would be updated on its findings upon completion, likely be early in 2024.

Councillor Jason Walsh asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council regarding the Councillor Portal regarding cases closed with no update and asked whether Councillor Stuart agreed that a review of the system was required.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that 4,454 cases had been responded to in a timely manner since 5th May, but shared the frustration of cases being closed inappropriately and outlined that officers had given assurances that these were being reported back to the responsible officers. Councillor Stuart also asked whether the Chair of the Member Support Steering Group would review these issues at its next meeting.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny asked a question to Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee asking whether the proposed move of Birkenhead the proposed move of Birkenhead Market to the Argos building, if approved, would be a permanent or a temporary move.

In the absence of Councillor Jones, Councillor Paul Stuart responded to say that he had met with the Birkenhead Market Traders Association the same day at the Argos site. He outlined that some traders didn't appreciate how large the Argos site was with several advising that they did not want to move to the House of Fraser site. Councillor Stuart gave assurances that the Council would fully engage market traders with the future plans via meaningful consultation. The Civic Mayor outlined that Councillor Jones would also provide a written response.

Councillor Ed Lamb asked a question to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee regarding road safety incidents at Broadway roundabout and sought an update on the progress of the programme of works needed urgently.

In response, Councillor Grey agreed that the work was needed urgently and outlined that the feasibility of design had been approved in March 2023 and the work would be included in the programme of work for 2024/25 which was due at the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in March 2024.

Councillor Amanda Onwuemene asked a question to Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee regarding whether the new proposed site for Birkenhead Market would include a multi-use entertainment facility and food hall and whether a report to members was required urgently.

The Civic Mayor outlined that in the absence of Councillor Jones, a written response would be provided.

Councillor Mike Redfern asked a question to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on the progress of the Committee's undertaking to increase allotment provision across the borough by 1000 plots by 2025.

In response, Councillor Grey outlined how ambitious the target was given an increase of 1,000 plots represented a 50% increase, and outlined the variety of additional plots that had been allocated up to a number of 184, with additional work ongoing to identify further sites.

Councillor Redfern asked a supplementary question on what the average wait time for an allotment site was. In response, Councillor Grey outlined that the average waiting time was under 4 years, with some plots having a waiting time of up to 9 years but others under a year.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council regarding the brownfield development as part of the progress of the Local Plan and what work was underway to get funding and deliver the brownfield first regeneration as quickly as possible.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that regeneration was a Council Plan priority and the brownfield first policy had cross party support and was a bedrock of the Local Plan. Councillor Stuart outlined that the Council had an excellent record of securing regeneration funding including the recent £10.78m of Levelling Up funding for Liscard and was confident the Council had the resources to deliver on its regeneration commitments.

Councillor Stuart Kelly asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council querying whether the Cleveland Street council depot had been identified as requiring relocation to Limekiln Lane in order to support housing development in the Cleveland Street area of potentially 1,000 homes and the unlocking of more on the peel estate beyond.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that there had been a strategic review of the future requirements of the 4 depot sites, with the Council owning three of the sites and leasing one, noting that the outcome of the review would be considered by the Corporate Property Board in February 2024 and then further with members.

Councillor Kelly asked a supplementary question outlining the need for the Cleveland Street depot to move if the area was to be redeveloped for housing and queried why there was not a definitive date for the move. In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that the site could not be relocated until the review had been undertaken and the site reallocated as part of the Local Plan.

65 **NEW COUNCIL PLAN**

The first matter for approval was to approve the new Council Plan as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That the new Council Plan be approved.

66 **2023-24 CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 2**

The second matter for approval was to approve the revised Capital Programme of £100 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of the report and the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 of the report, as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That

(1) the revised Capital Programme of £100 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of the report be approved.

(2) the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 in the report be approved.

67 **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024-25**

The third matter for approval was to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2024/25, as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2024/25 be approved.

68 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

The fourth matter for approval was the appointment of persons to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was –

Resolved – That the following persons be appointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of 4 years:-

**Peter Bounds - Chair
Steven Griffiths
Tony Green
Helen Brennan**

69 **SIX MONTH ATTENDANCE RULE S85 (1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

The fifth matter for approval was to grant the absence of Councillor Daisy Kenny from all Council and Committee Meetings be authorised and approved for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, that the recommendation as detailed in the report be agreed, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Gill Wood. Councillor Stuart outlined that Councillor Wood was still recovering from an injury and would be unable to attend a meeting within 6 months of her previous meeting.

The motion was put to the vote and agreed unanimously. It was therefore –

Resolved – That the absence of Councillors Daisy Kenny and Gill Wood from all Council and Committee Meetings be authorised and approved for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

70 **DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

The Civic Mayor invited members to ask questions in relation to the minutes of Committee meetings held since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Mary Jordan asked a question to the Chair of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in relation to minute item 42 of

the meeting held on 19 October 2023, seeking support in promoting the Wirral Festival of Music in its 75th anniversary year and the year of Wirral being Borough of Culture.

In response, Councillor Cameron agreed that the festival should be promoted across Wirral and wider City Region, and outlined that members had previously requested that a review of the geographical spread of Borough of Culture events be undertaken to ensure it covered the whole of the Borough.

Councillor Graham Davies asked a question to the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in relation to minute item 42 of the meeting held on 9 October 2023, asking whether she was aware of several clauses from the lease with Heswall Hall Community Trust regarding the closure of the car park. Councillor Grey undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor Kieran Murphy asked a question to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee in relation to minute item 54 of the meeting held on 4 October 2023, asking whether he agreed that the regeneration of Birkenhead was essential for the success of the Local Plan and protection of the greenbelt.

In response, Councillor Stuart agreed that the regeneration of Birkenhead was key to delivering the Local Plan and protecting the greenbelt and committed to continue to speak up for the Borough and called on the Council to support the delivery of the Local Plan.

71 **JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

One question had been submitted by Councillor Angie Davies to Councillor Brian Kenny as Vice-Chair of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, in accordance with Standing Order 12.4.

Councillor Davies asked how well-equipped Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Authority were to ensure the communities of Merseyside are safe in light of the new Building Safety Act and the phase 1 inquiry report into the Grenfell Tower disaster.

In response, Councillor Kenny outlined that the majority of actions within the inquiry report had been delivered by the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority with those outstanding awaiting contributions from partners and were scheduled to be concluded by the end of the financial year. Councillor Kenny further detailed the work that had been undertaken including face to face visits to every high-rise property on Merseyside, with fire safety measures being implemented and enforcement notices issued where necessary.

The Mayor outlined that he had received notice of an urgent question under Standing Order 12.4(b) and considered the matter met the urgency test.

The question was from Councillor Naomi Graham to Councillor Steve Foulkes as Chair of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, seeking an update on the potential withdrawal of the 418 Bus Service, the alternatives officers were considering and confirmation that the Transport committee would support additional budget if necessary to ensure residents were not left without access to a bus service.

In response, Councillor Foulkes outlined that Arriva had taken the option to consult on the withdrawal of the service, but had since agreed to extend the consultation. He outlined that officers were discussing a number of options for the continuation of the service, with the preference being Arriva continuing to deliver the route, and that other options being considered were commercially sensitive. Councillor Foulkes outlined that the Transport Committee had unanimously resolved to retain the service.

72 **MOTION 1 - MAXIMISING INCOME FROM BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES TO HELP ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN WIRRAL**

Councillor Amanda Onwuemene moved and Councillor Ruth Molyneux seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13. In moving the motion, Councillor Onwuemene confirmed she was happy to accept the amendment moved by the Liberal Democrat group as follows:

Insert additional wording into paragraph 4 'including the use of the "Low Income Family Tracker'. Council recognises that advice services have been provided by well developed arrangements through a number of organisations over the years'.

Insert additional paragraph after paragraph 6,

'Council notes that in September 2021, the Adult Social Care and Public Health (ASPH) Committee began a programme of work to provide a more accessible and comprehensive approach to benefits available to residents. Further progress was made by the ASC&PH Committee in November 22 (Minute 60 refers) and July 2023 (Minute 25 refers), with the aim of securing a new service. Council further notes that an officer decision notice is expected within this municipal year with the aim to secure an improved range of services to be in place by next April. The report to the ASC&PH Committee recognised that the work of the team and volunteers at ' Ask Us Wirral' had helped secure funds for our residents including £25.2million awarded to people through benefit claims'.

Insert additional wording at the end of section 2. After 'income maximisation' insert 'Within the investigation, the Director of Finance is requested to

examine the technical appendix and methodology set out in the Policy and Practice report, in particular the sections on 'locally administered benefits' and Council Tax Support to establish whether the suggestions and calculations can offer any steps that Wirral Council and its partners can take to assist claimants and,'

Insert additional wording at the end of section 3. After 'March 2023' insert 'incorporating proposals that the Council already has in progress through work ongoing with Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.'

Following a debate, and Councillor Onwuemene having replied, it was –

Resolved (58:0) (1 abstention) – That

3.8 million people in the UK, including one million children experienced destitution in 2022. This is two and a half times the figure of destitute adults and children that there were in 2017. Moreover, a growing number of adults and children are living in deep poverty and are in danger of becoming destitute. They are struggling to meet their most basic needs for a warm dry home and to keep clean and fed. Three-quarters of destitute adults are in receipt of benefits which are not keeping up with the rise in inflation and rent increases.

Data is now beginning to show that poverty levels in East Wirral are starting to be replicated in parts of West Wirral. Poverty that this council is committed to reducing is rising across Wirral.

Deep poverty increasingly affects adults who are in employment but unable to meet the increasing costs of rent, food and bills. Poverty kills potential in children who are often too hungry, cold and tired to learn, sleep or play. In adults, poverty and debt have a negative effect on a person's mental health, their confidence and self - esteem.

Wirral Council currently works with numerous organisations to administer a range of benefits for residents. Council is keen that every effort is made to ensure that Wirral Residents are able to receive any potential unclaimed benefits and allowances in order to maximise income through working in collaboration with organisations for example Citizens Advice Bureau and Policy in Practice including the use of the Low Income Family Tracker'. Council recognises that advice services have been provided by well developed arrangements through a number of organisations over the years.

Nationally the total amount of unclaimed benefits and allowances has reached approximately £19 billion a year. The figure for the Wirral is at

least £91 million per year in unclaimed benefits and allowances across 160,000 families. Some examples of such are as follows:

- Universal Credit £29,829,512.00
- Carer's Allowance £14,011,024.00
- Pension Credit £11,596,125.00
- Council Tax Support £18,219,721.00 [2]

Other unclaimed benefit examples are: Council Tax, child support, broadband, water tariffs and free school meals.

Council notes that in September 2021, the Adult Social Care and Public Health (ASPH) Committee began a programme of work to provide a more accessible and comprehensive approach to benefits available to residents. Further progress was made by the ASC&PH Committee in November 22 (Minute 60 refers) and July 2023 (Minute 25 refers), with the aim of securing a new service. Council further notes that an officer decision notice is expected within this municipal year with the aim to secure an improved range of services to be in place by next April. The report to the ASC&PH Committee recognised that the work of the team and volunteers at ' Ask Us Wirral' had helped secure funds for our residents including £25.2million awarded to people through benefit claims.

Council therefore:

1. acknowledges that there is a significant amount of unclaimed support payments in Wirral;
2. asks that the Director of Finance in consultation with the Director of Public Health investigates what additional information relevant to unclaimed support is available through Wirral-based and national organisations in order to support our residents in income maximisation; Within the investigation, the Director of Finance is requested to examine the technical appendix and methodology set out in the Policy and Practice report, in particular the sections on 'locally administered benefits' and Council Tax Support to establish whether the suggestions and calculations can offer any steps that Wirral Council and its partners can take to assist claimants and,
3. requests that a proposal on how the Council can further support residents to maximise income be brought to members of the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2024. incorporating proposals that the Council already has in progress through work ongoing with Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Councillor Janette Williamson moved and Councillor Paul Martin seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Councillor Jeff Green moved and Councillor Lesley Rennie seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Insert 5 paragraphs before paragraph 1,

‘Council notes the then Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced an independent public inquiry on a statutory basis with full powers, under the Inquiries Act of 2005, on 12th May 2021, he said it “would seek to scrutinise and learn lessons from all key aspects of the UK response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Council further notes that the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE was appointed as the Chair of the public inquiry on 15th December 2021. Baroness Hallett is a former Court of Appeal judge and has previously conducted a range of high-profile and complex inquests, inquiries and reviews, including acting as coroner for the inquests into the deaths of the 52 victims of the 7 July 2005 London bombings and as chair of the Iraq Fatalities Investigations.

The inquiry’s terms of reference, developed by Baroness Hallett and published in June 2022, set out a series of aims including:

- Examining the public health response to the pandemic;
- Examining the response to the pandemic by the health and care services
- Examining the economic response to the pandemic, including government interventions;

Council also notes that the Inquiry is yet to cover: the setting up of a Vaccination Task Force, the purchase, at risk, of vaccines and the tremendous vaccination rollout programme. Council further notes the incredible business and public support provided by the Government during the pandemic, including the world-beating Furlough Scheme, is still yet to be examined by the Inquiry.

Council recalls Wirral’s businesses received £99.44 million of direct grant support from HM Government, passported through Wirral Council, to support them through the COVID 19 crisis’.

Insert two paragraphs after paragraph 7,

‘Council also commends the outstanding work, in response to the COVID 19 crisis, by the Council’s Senior Officers, all staff, Leader of the Council, Pat

Hackett together with all Party Leaders, from the moment that British citizens were repatriated from Wuhan to Wirral in January 2020.

Council notes Pat Hackett stepped down from being a councillor and Leader of the Council in September 2020, and notes up to this point the officer and political leadership of the Council had been united in their non-partisan approach to the crisis’.

Insert 3 paragraphs and table after paragraph 8,

‘Council would welcome clarification from the proposer of this motion, and Leader of Wirral Council from September 2020, as to whether she has sought to inform the Public Inquiry and detail when she publicly dissented with the Government’s actions during the period of the pandemic and explain to the Inquiry how Wirral Council spent £107.20 million of Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency funding allocated to the Council from HM Government.

Council notes this funding was provided to enable local councils to fulfil a critical role during the pandemic, including: containing outbreaks; protecting the most vulnerable residents; maintaining vital services; and testing and protecting the population from COVID-19.

Funding Source	Year	Department
COVID-19 emergency unringfenced funding for LAs (Tranches 1-4)	2020/21	DLUHC
Additional 2021/22 unringfenced funding for LAs	2021/22	DLUHC
Test and Trace Service Support Grant	2020/21	DHSC
Contain Outbreak Management Fund	2020/21 and 2021/22	DHSC
Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund (including Extension)	2020/21	DHSC
Adult Social Care Workplace Capacity Fund	2020/21	DHSC
Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund	2020/21	DHSC
Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund (including Extension)	2021/22	DHSC

ASC Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund	2021/22	DHSC
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Support Funding	2020/21	DLUHC
Community Champions Fund	2020/21	DLUHC/ DHSC
Compliance and Enforcement Grant	2020/21 and 2021/22	DLUHC
Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund	2020/21 and 2021/22	HO
Welcome Back Fund (formerly Reopening High Streets Safely Fund)	2020/21 and 2021/22	DLUHC
Provisional Rough Sleeping Emergency Funding	2020/21	DLUHC
Next Steps Accommodation Programme	2020/21	DLUHC
Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies	2020/21	DEFRA
Additional Home to School Transport Funding	2020/21 and 21/22	DfT
DWP Covid Winter Support Grant Scheme (including Easter Extension and Top-up)	2020/21 and 2021/22	DWP
Omicron Support Fund	2021/22	DHSC
Protect and Vaccinate Scheme	2021/22	DLUHC
National Leisure Recovery Fund	2020/21	DCMS (Sport England)
Sales, Fees and Charges Compensation Scheme	2020/21 and 2021/22	DLUHC
Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22	2021/22	DLUHC

Tax Income Guarantee Scheme 2021/22	2021/22	DLUHC
Total Coronavirus (COVID-19): emergency funding for Wirral Council in 2020 to 2021 and additional support in 2021 to 2022	£107.20 million	
Coronavirus business grant funding to Wirral businesses	£99.44 million	

Finally, Council asserts its belief that it is good practice to allow any Inquiry to hear all the evidence and publish its findings before jumping to conclusions and seeking to apportion blame.'

Council debated the motion and amendment and the guillotine was applied at 9.30pm. The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost (16:43) (1 abstention).

The original motion was therefore put to the vote, and it was –

Resolved (43:16) (1 abstention) – That

Council welcomes the Covid19 Inquiry as an opportunity for bereaved families, experts, and NHS/key workers to tell their truths in an open and public domain.

Council is mortified by the evidence of advisors and senior civil servants at the heart of government during the pandemic who variously described Boris Johnson to the covid enquiry as presiding over a chaotic, feral, and incompetent administration.[1] An administration which played fast and loose with people’s lives, rode roughshod over expert and academic advice, and poured billions of taxpayers’ money into PPE contracts for their friends and donors. PPE which didn’t work and much of which needed to be destroyed [2].

Council condemns the contempt shown by senior government figures, including the past PM Boris Johnson, and the current PM Rishi Sunak when they casually and regularly disregarded their own rules during lockdown. Partying whilst the rest of the country did what was asked of them and missed funerals, bereavements, hugs and comfort.

Council condemns the statement by Boris Johnson – as reported by Special Advisor Dominic Cummings and confirmed by Edward Udny-Lister – Johnson’s Chief of Staff to ‘let the bodies pile high’[3]. Council condemns the view that Boris Johnson “was obsessed with older

people accepting their fate and letting the young get on with life...”, as shown to the Covid Inquiry from Sir Patrick Vallance’s diaries [4].

Council is distressed that between 23 March 2020 and 20 October 2023 a total of 1,434 Wirral residents died of Covid, 326 in care homes[5]. Many of which might have been avoided with a responsible, compassionate, honest, and serious government. Instead, the most vulnerable were dismissed as collateral damage.

Council extends its wholehearted sympathy with all those families who have lost a loved one to Covid and hope they get closure of sorts from the Covid Inquiry. We also extend our eternal gratitude for our tireless NHS staff, key workers, and care home staff.

Council requests that all Group Leaders write to the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and ask for an apology for the way Wirral residents have been treated by his government during Covid.

74 MOTION 3 - PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

Councillor Jenny Johnson moved and Councillor Jeff Green seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

In moving the motion, Councillor Johnson confirmed she was happy to accept the amendment proposed by the Green Group, as follows:

After paragraph 4, insert 2 final paragraphs,

‘Council further recognises that, “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including housing”, as stated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Council therefore requests that Director of Regeneration brings a report to the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee within this municipal year providing information and making recommendations to address:

1. the needs of all people on the Wirral who are homeless, rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation;
2. availability and planned construction of new council housing and socially rented homes on Wirral with secure tenures and affordable rents; and
3. protections available to social housing stock from the right to buy and right to acquire schemes’

Councillor Paul Stuart moved and Councillor Angie Davies seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Remove wording in paragraph 4 'Council welcomes this funding as a means to protect some of our most vulnerable residents' and insert penultimate paragraph,

'Council also notes:

Across Wirral, 3,142 households are due to re-mortgage their homes between now and May 2024. For those families coming off fixed term mortgages they will face an extra average monthly repayment of £220. This could lead to an increase in the number of households threatened with homelessness.

In Wirral 1,225 households are owed a prevention or relief duty with homeless relief duty owed to 218 households in December 2022, rising up to 784 in November 2023. A 260% increase.

The estimated number of deaths among homeless people has increased by 53.7% between 2013 and 2021.

Since the Government promised to ban Section 21 notices in April 2019, 419 households in Wirral have been put at risk of homelessness after being issued with a no-fault eviction.

That whilst the funding for drug and alcohol treatment programmes is welcome, it is insufficient and will not make up for cuts to services since 2010 due to central Government funding to Wirral Council falling by 24.9%'

Nationally, funding for drug and alcohol treatment across England was cut by 16% between 2013 and 2017 following funding changes brought in by the Health and Social Care Act, leading to a 23% increase in overall drug use between 2013-2020, and drug-related deaths in England and Wales increasing by 87.1% between 2012 and 2021'

Insert 'Council' before 'wishes to place on record' in paragraph 4 which now becomes the final paragraph.'

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate the matter.

The amendment was put to the vote and was carried (43:16) (1 abstention).

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and was carried (59:0) (1 abstention). It was therefore –

Resolved – That

Council notes Wirral has recently been allocated £1.4 million as part of the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Council understands this funding forms part of an additional £34.6 million awarded recently to 70 councils around the country, and follows the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018, placing a duty on local councils to act.

Council further notes the £7.8 million of Government funding also allocated to Wirral for drug and alcohol treatment programmes and understands part of this funding will be used to extend the successful Wirral ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) programme.

Council also notes:

Across Wirral, 3,142 households are due to re-mortgage their homes between now and May 2024. For those families coming off fixed term mortgages they will face an extra average monthly repayment of £220. This could lead to an increase in the number of households threatened with homelessness [1].

In Wirral 1,225 households are owed a prevention or relief duty with homeless relief duty owed to 218 households in December 2022, rising up to 784 in November 2023. A 260% increase [2].

The estimated number of deaths among homeless people has increased by 53.7% between 2013 and 2021 [3]

Since the Government promised to ban Section 21 notices in April 2019, 419 households in Wirral have been put at risk of homelessness after being issued with a no-fault eviction.[4]

That whilst the funding for drug and alcohol treatment programmes is welcome, it is insufficient and will not make up for cuts to services since 2010 due to central Government funding to Wirral Council falling by 24.9%;[5]

Nationally, funding for drug and alcohol treatment across England was cut by 16% between 2013 and 2017 following funding changes brought in by the Health and Social Care Act, leading to a 23% increase in overall drug use between 2013-2020, and drug-related deaths in England and Wales increasing by 87.1% between 2012 and 2021 .[6]

Council wishes to place on record its gratitude to those people who work tirelessly to combat homelessness and substance abuse in our Borough including the Housing and Homelessness Team, Merseyside Police, Wirral Ways to Recovery, the YMCA, The Ark and The Whitechapel Centre.

Council further recognises that, “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including housing”, as stated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹

Council therefore requests that Director of Regeneration brings a report to the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee within this municipal year providing information and making recommendations to address:

- 1. the needs of all people on the Wirral who are homeless, rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation;**
- 2. availability and planned construction of new council housing and socially rented homes on Wirral with secure tenures and affordable rents; and**
- 3. protections available to social housing stock from the right to buy and right to acquire schemes.**

75 MOTION 4 - MERSEY TIDAL POWER

Councillor Phil Gilchrist moved and Councillor Allan Brame seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

In moving the motion, Councillor Phil Gilchrist confirmed he was happy to accept the amendment proposed by the Conservative Group as follows:

After Paragraph 6 insert a final paragraph, 'Council notes that our membership contains valuable expertise in tidal energy, for example Councillor Graham Davies has worked in this field for 36 years, therefore in order to support the Director of Regeneration and Place, Council further directs the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee to establish a task and finish group, drawing on membership from across the Council and all political groups, to examine the potential benefits and risks of Mersey Tidal Power to Wirral and liaise with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.'

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate the matter, and it was –

Resolved (58:0) (1 abstention) – That

Council notes that a tidal scheme for generating power from the River Mersey is again being given serious consideration by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Council recognises the importance of securing long term and reliable energy supplies for our region and nation in order to tackle the issue of climate change and reduce Co2 emissions. Council is aware that the Liverpool City Region has been making progress with this long standing aspiration, by signing an agreement with the South Korean water company to harness their expertise.

Council is anxious to secure more details on the project over and above those contained in this The Liverpool City Region ‘Tidal Range’ brochure.

In view of this Council requests that The Director of Regeneration and Place approaches the Liverpool City Region in order to obtain the following:

- technical information on the latest version of the scheme;**
- an outline of the likely costs and sources of funding;**
- the desired location and implications for shipping, our shoreline and risk of silting;**
- potential effects on wildlife; and**
- its expected contribution to energy supply and security.**

Council requests that Officers be requested to arrange a presentation to all members at an early stage’ with information obtained by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Council notes that our membership contains valuable expertise in tidal energy, for example Councillor Graham Davies has worked in this field for 36 years, therefore in order to support the Director of Regeneration and Place, Council further directs the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee to establish a task and finish group, drawing on membership from across the Council and all political groups, to examine the potential benefits and risks of Mersey Tidal Power to Wirral and liaise with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

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COUNCIL

Monday, 4 December 2023

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Jerry Williams) in the Chair

Councillors	A Ainsworth	H Gorman	P Martin
	C Baldwin	N Graham	C McDonald
	P Basnett	JE Green	G McManus
	G Bennett	EA Grey	J McManus
	S Bennett	A Hodson	S Mountney
	M Booth	K Hodson	R Pitt
	A Brame	P Jobson	S Powell-Wilde
	H Cameron	G Jenkinson	H Raymond
	C Carubia	J Johnson	L Rennie
	P Cleary	M Jordan	M Redfern
	T Cox	S Kelly	M Skillicorn
	A Davies	B Kenny	K Stuart
	GJ Davies	J Stewart Laing	P Stuart
	G Davies	T Laing	M Sullivan
	S Foulkes	E Lamb	J Walsh
	A Gardner	I Lewis	J Williamson
	P Gilchrist	L Luxon-Kewley	V Wilson

55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interests were made.

56 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Jo Bird, Chris Cooke, Judith Grier, Brenda Hall, Tony Jones, Daisy Kenny, Ruth Molyneux, Kieran Murphy, Tony Murphy, Amanda Onwuemene, Cherry Povall, Jean Robinson, Ewan Tomeny and Gill Wood.

57 HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH SUE HIGGINSON, OBE

The Council considered a report from the Director of Law and Governance in respect to a proposal to admit Sue Higginson, as an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough.

The recommendation was in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of her dedicated service to the Borough, that Sue Higginson be admitted as Honorary Freewoman of this Borough.

Several Councillors spoke of Sue's achievements, particularly her role as Principal of Wirral Met College for 11 years and the success of the college under her stewardship including the growth in its roll to 10,000 students and the impact it had on the borough. Councillors also spoke of the impact Sue had made in Wirral outside of her role with the college, including her involvement in raising funding for the Mayor's Charities, the introduction of the wellbeing garden at Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and her work with the Public Health team during the pandemic. It was reported to Council that Sue had been made an Officer of the British Empire in 2022 in recognition of her contribution to education.

Following the speeches from Councillors, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, that Sue Higginson be admitted as Honorary Freewoman of this Borough.

COUNCIL

Monday, 26 February 2024

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Jerry Williams) in the Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor Cherry Povall, JP)

Councillors	A Ainsworth	JE Green	J McManus
	C Baldwin	EA Grey	R Molyneux
	P Basnett	J Grier	S Mountney
	G Bennett	B Hall	K Murphy
	S Bennett	A Hodson	T Murphy
	J Bird	K Hodson	A Onwuemene
	M Booth	P Jobson	R Pitt
	A Brame	G Jenkinson	S Powell-Wilde
	H Cameron	J Johnson	H Raymond
	C Carubia	T Jones	L Rennie
	P Cleary	M Jordan	M Redfern
	C Cooke	S Kelly	J Robinson
	T Cox	B Kenny	M Skillicorn
	A Davies	J Stewart Laing	K Stuart
	GJ Davies	T Laing	P Stuart
	G Davies	E Lamb	M Sullivan
	S Foulkes	I Lewis	E Tomeny
	A Gardner	L Luxon-Kewley	J Walsh
	P Gilchrist	P Martin	J Williamson
	H Gorman	C McDonald	V Wilson
	N Graham	G McManus	G Wood

Apologies Councillors D Kenny

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Civic Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that he had been informed in advance of a number of Members who had a personal interest in agenda item 4b 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, related to the schools budget element by virtue of holding positions as school governors: Councillors Brame, Carubia, Cleary, Cooke, Angie Davies, George Davies, Foulkes, Gilchrist, Grey, Jobson, Julie McManus, Raymond, Robinson, Sullivan, Wilson and Wood.

The Civic Mayor also reported following personal interests insofar as they related to the school's budget element, by virtue of those Members either themselves or having close family members working in either Schools or the

Council's Children, Families and Education Directorate: Councillors George Davies, Julie McManus, Graham McManus and Povall.

The Civic Mayor then asked for further declarations of interest. Councillor Mountney declared an interest relating to the school's budget. Councillor Naomi Graham declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of her husband's employment.

77 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor then asked for any apologies, and this was given for Councillor Daisy Kenny.

The Civic Mayor welcomed Cllr Gill Wood to the Council Meeting, after a prolonged absence.

Since the last Council meeting, the Civic Mayor announced he had attended 15 events over the Christmas period. He had also attended events at Wirral Mind, Birkenhead Library, Rathbone Studios, Caldry Manor as well as attending a 100th Birthday celebration and two citizenship ceremonies. The Civic Mayor had opened Upton library, attended 3 Chinese New Year celebrations, visited the Malay Community and Northwest Air Ambulance Service. Other notable events included the Wirral Borough of Culture Launch Event, the 10th anniversary of the Equilibrium Hub, a visit to the Future Year, The Autism Together Staff Awards, Woodchurch Family Hub, Wirral Arch, a game at Tranmere Rovers and a visit to the Merseyside Air Training Corps, a Civic event for the Mayor of Neston and Birkenhead Rotary Club dinner. The Civic Mayor also refereed the New Brighton tug of war on New Years Day. A further highlight was hosting the Peruvian ambassador at a commemorative naming event of the esplanade at Monks Ferry.

78 **PROCEDURE FOR BUDGET DECISION MEETING OF COUNCIL**

The Council was then invited to consider the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 13 February 2024, in respect of the procedure to be adopted for the budget debate at this extraordinary meeting of the Council.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, it was –

Resolved – That, for the duration of the extraordinary meeting of 26 February 2024 (Budget Council):

(a) the procedure attached as Appendix A be followed in respect of the meeting; and

(b) Council Standing Order 15.4 (timing of speeches) be suspended together with such other standing orders as may conflict with the Budget Council procedure or the Mayor's administration of the meeting, in such a manner as the Mayor in his or her absolute discretion dictates, to ensure the objective of Council setting a lawful budget and council tax requirement prevails.

79 MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

Seven matters had been referred by the meetings of Policy and Resources Committee on 17 January and 13 February 2024

80 COUNCIL TAX 2024/25 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME, DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

The first matter requiring approval was in relation to proposed Council Tax 2024/25 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Discounts and Exemptions, the motion for which was moved by Councillor Paul Stuart and seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson.

Councillor Stuart spoke to this motion, highlighting key points including the continuation of discounts to Wirral Women's Aid, Care Leavers and the Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme.

It was then

Resolved – that that the level and award of each local discount for 2024/25 be as follows: -

1. Wirral Women's & Children's Aid

To continue to award Wirral Women & Children's Aid 100% discount. This remains unchanged from 2023/24.

2. Care Leaver's Discount

To award Care Leavers the requisite discount to reduce their Council Tax liability to zero until they are 25. This remains unchanged from 2023/24.

3. Empty Property Discounts 2024/25

Discount category D = 0% Full charge on properties undergoing renovations. Discount category C = 0% Full charge on empty properties from date they become unoccupied. Both to remain unchanged from 2023/24, and to include an exception for

properties requiring adaptations to meet the need of a disabled person who will be occupying the property as soon as the adaptations are complete.

This also applies to properties awaiting renovations prior to being occupied by someone under Ukraine resettlement scheme.

To reduce the Empty Property Premium from 2024/25 to properties that have been empty for more than one year (Currently Two). So that the following apply: - 100% (200% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty for more than one year. 200% (300% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty more than five years. 300% (400% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty more than ten years.

4. Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme

The Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme, approved by Cabinet in October 2013, to continue in its current format for 2024/25. The Scheme offers help and assistance in exceptional cases of hardship. Appendix 1

5. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) The current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to remain unchanged from 2023/24 apart from the following:

- a. The scheme to be aligned to all the Department of Work and Pensions uprating's and changes for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.
- b. There to be no loss of entitlement due to payments made under government defined compensation schemes.

6. Changes to the treatment of second homes (dwellings that are furnished but are not someone's sole or main residence)

From 1st April 2025 the council to charge an additional 100% council tax (200% Council Tax) for any person with a second home within Wirral

81 2024/25 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Mayor announced that it was his intention to run one single debate on the motion but then take separate named votes at the end of discussion on the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy recommendations 1-4 and 6 and on the statutory calculations for the Council Tax precept (recommendation 5).

Councillor Paul Stuart formally moved the Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, and which was set out as a recommendation of the Policy and Resources Committee of 13 February 2024, minute 111.

The motion having been formally moved and seconded, Councillor Paul Stuart spoke to his motion.

Councillor Jeff Green, as Leader of the Conservative Group, then addressed the Council on the budget proposals.

Councillor Pat Cleary, as Leader of the Green Group, then addressed the Council on the budget proposals.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist, as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, then addressed the Council on the budget proposals.

The budget proposals were then debated.

The Council were then invited to vote on the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy recommendations 1-4 and 6

The Council voted as follows:

For the Motion (64) – Councillors A Ainsworth, C Baldwin, P Basnett ,G Bennett, S Bennett, J Bird, M Booth, A Brame, H Cameron, C Carubia, P Cleary, C Cooke, T Cox, A Davies, GJ Davies, G Davies, S Foulkes, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, H Gorman, N Graham, JE Green, EA Grey, J Grier, B Hall, A Hodson, K Hodson, P Jobson, G Jenkinson, J Johnson, T Jones, M Jordan, S Kelly, B Kenny, J Stewart Laing, T Laing, E Lamb, I Lewis, L Luxon-Kewley, P Martin, C McDonald, G McManus, J McManus, R Molyneux, S Mountney, K Murphy, T Murphy, A Onwuemene, R Pitt, C Povall, S Powell-Wilde, H Raymond, L Rennie, M Redfern, J Robinson, M Skillicorn, K Stuart, P Stuart, M Sullivan, E Tomeny, J Walsh, J Williamson, V Wilson, G Wood

Against the motion – none

Abstention – Councillor J Williams

It was therefore resolved – that

Resolved (64 for, 1 abstention) - That,

1. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, following consultation with the Chair and Group Spokespersons of the Policy & Resources Committee, to do anything necessary – including minor financial adjustments – to give effect to the proposals contained in this report and address any funding changes, if any.

2. the response to the financial proposals forming a draft budget for the purposes of consultation under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act, set out as below be noted:

Appendix 1 Budget Proposals
Appendix 2 Budget consultation
Appendix 3 Policy & Service Committee budget proposals feedback
Appendix 4 The Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget
Appendix 5 Provisional Council Tax Statutory Calculations
Appendix 6 Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
Appendix 7 Medium-Term Financial Strategy
Appendix 8 Budget proposal changes since November 2023
Appendix 9 Council Tax Base Calculation Process and Associated Background Information.

3. a Revenue Budget of £399.603m be approved, noting that the Section 151 Officer in liaison with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service may need to make adjustments to the Budget estimates before the preparation of final reports for Full Council on 26 February 2024.

4. Accordingly it was resolved that:

a) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out as Appendix 7 be approved

b) increases to the Council's fees and charges equal to or above the annual Consumer Price Index reported by the Office for National Statistics in September 2023 be approved, unless either of the following conditions apply:

- i. There is a statutory constraint that prevents such an increase,**
- ii. The Council is operating in a market whereby such an increase would result in the Council being uncompetitive.**

c) the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for Business Rates for 2024/25 set out as Appendix 6 be approved.

d) the creation of a £1m project fund within the budget for 2024-25 as set out in section 3 and that oversight of the project fund be retained by the Finance Sub-Committee be approved.

e) the Unearmarked Reserves (General Fund Balances) is maintained at a figure not lower than £13.18m for the course of the 2024/25 financial year.

f) the Budget Proposals as set out in Appendix 1 be approved and authorise, in respect of the Budget Proposals, that the Director with portfolio undertake such actions as they consider necessary to implement the agreed Budget and deliver the savings, income and efficiency proposals developed as part of the formulation process and update Committees accordingly.

g) the 2024/25 Schools Budget of £378.552m be approved

6. the reinstalment of the one-off Saving of £400k from the temporary closure of Wallasey Town Hall, in full, until April 2025 be authorised and add the additional £246k saving this produces to the £1m investment fund for activities linked to visible improvements in services across the borough.

The Council were then invited to vote on the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy recommendation 5.

The Council voted as follows:

For the Motion (64) – Councillors A Ainsworth, C Baldwin, P Basnett ,G Bennett, S Bennett, J Bird, M Booth, A Brame, H Cameron, C Carubia, P Cleary, C Cooke, T Cox, A Davies, GJ Davies, G Davies, S Foulkes, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, H Gorman, N Graham, JE Green, EA Grey, J Grier, B Hall, A Hodson, K Hodson, P Jobson, G Jenkinson, J Johnson, T Jones, M Jordan, S Kelly, B Kenny, J Stewart Laing, T Laing, E Lamb, I Lewis, L Luxon-Kewley, P Martin, C McDonald, G McManus, J McManus, R Molyneux, S Mountney, K Murphy, T Murphy, A Onwuemene, R Pitt, C Povall, S Powell-Wilde, H Raymond, L Rennie, M Redfern, J Robinson, M Skillicorn, K Stuart, P Stuart, M Sullivan, E Tomeny, J Walsh, J Williamson, V Wilson, G Wood

Against the motion – none

Abstention – Councillor J Williams

It was therefore resolved (64 for, 1 abstention) – that

a) the Band D Council Tax be set at £1,888.22 for the Wirral Borough Council element of the Council Tax, representing a general increase of 2.99% and 2.00% ringfenced increase to Adult Social Care, and the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2024/25 of £181.3m as detailed in Appendix 5.

b) that the additional precepts from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority remain (be noted) in estimated form and authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer to implement any variation to the overall council tax arising from the final notification of the precepts.

The third matter requiring approval was in relation to the capital monitoring for quarter 3 2023/24.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson it was –

Resolved – that,

1. the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 in this report be approved.

2. the changes to the programme detailed in section 3.8 be approved.

3. the revised Capital Programme of £97 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of this report be approved.

83 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-29**

The fourth item requiring approval was in relation to the capital programme for 2024-29. Councillor Phil Gilchrist spoke to this item, highlighting the inclusion of funding in the budget to help deal with the condition of the road network, via grants through the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. Councillor Gilchrist stressed the importance of aligning the programming of the works, selection of contractors and progress of surfacing work.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson it was –

Resolved – that

1. the new bids as detailed in Appendix B to this report, requiring £3.3 million of funding for inclusion in the Capital Programme be approved.

2. the Capital Programme 2024-29 as detailed in Appendix C to this report be approved.

84 **CAPITAL FINANCING STRATEGY 2024/25**

The fifth item requiring approval was in relation to the Capital Financing Strategy 2024/25.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson it was –

Resolved – that

- 1.the Capital Strategy for 2024/25 be approved.**
- 2. the associated Prudential Indicators be adopted, as detailed within this report.**
- 3. the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision policy as set out in Appendix A of this report be approved**

85 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

The sixth item requiring approval was in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson it was –

Resolved – that

- (1) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/2025 be approved**
- (2) the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2024/2025 be approved**
- (3) the Treasury Management Policy Statement be approved**

86 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

The seventh item requiring approval was in relation to the Investment Strategy 2024/25.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson it was –

Resolved – that the Investment Strategy for 2024/2025 which includes potential investment in the following activity areas be approved:

- 1. Commercial Property**
- 2. Service Investments: Loans;**
- 3. Service Investment: Shares (non-currently held); and**
- 4. Loan Commitments and Financial Guarantees be approved**

87 REVISION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

The Mayor requested Members to consider the report of the Director of Law & Corporate Services concerning a revision to the allocation of committee places to political groups. Inclusion of this item in this extra-ordinary council meeting, meant that effect could be given to change in political balance for the next cycle of committee meetings.

The Chair informed Members that any debate held on this item was to be held under joint debate procedure in common with all council meetings.

Councillor Paul Stuart moved and Councillor Jean Robinson seconded the motion the recommendations detailed in the report .

Councillor Pat Cleary moved and Councillor Gail Jenkinson seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 14.g

(1) Agree that the overall number of seats be reduced from 114 to 113 as set out in paragraph 3.1.7.

(2) agree the revised proportionality in the political composition of membership of ordinary committees of the Council as set out in the **revised** Appendix A detailed below.

(3) agree that the Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to act on the instruction of the relevant Group Leaders in relation to the members appointed to the revised committee places.

<i>Policy and Resources</i>	15	7	4	3	1
<i>Adult Social Care and Public Health</i>	11	4	3	3	1
<i>Children, Young People and Education</i>	11	5	3	2	1
<i>Economy, Regeneration and Housing</i>	11	5	2	3	1
<i>Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport</i>	11	5	3	2	1
<i>Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure</i>	11	5	3	2	1
<i>Audit and Risk Management</i>	7	3	2	1	1
<i>Pensions</i>	11	5	3	2	1
<i>Planning</i>	11	5	3	2	1
<i>Regulatory and General Purposes</i>	14	6	3	4	1
Total	113	50	29	24	10

In this amended scenario, it was proposed by the Green Group that the seat vacated by the Labour Group be allocated on the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee rather than as proposed on the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee.

Council then debated the motion and amendment. The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost (14:44) (7 abstentions).

The original motion was therefore put to the vote, and it was –

Resolved (44:14) (7 abstentions) – That

(1) the overall number of seats be reduced from 114 to 113 as set out in paragraph 3.1.7 be agreed

(2) the revised proportionality in the political composition of membership of ordinary committees of the Council as set out at Appendix A be agreed.

(3) that the Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to act on the instruction of the relevant Group Leaders in relation to the members appointed to the revised committee places be agreed.

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MINUTE EXTRACT CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2024

21 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25 AND 2025/26

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report. The report recommended amendments to the previously agreed dates for Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024/2025 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The report also recommended draft dates for the municipal year 2025/26 at Appendix 2.

Members reflected the importance of having a calendar set in advance for those of them who work full time and were appreciative of the changes made to rectify common movements.

Members expressed concerns regarding the July sequence of meetings, not allowing sufficient time for group meetings after the Council Summons. Members requested officers to revise the July sequences prior to the recommendation going to Full Council.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Mike Sullivan, it was,

Resolved – That Council be recommended to approve, subject to an amendment by the Director of Law and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons in regard to the sequence of July meetings.

1. the revised Calendar of Meetings 2024/25,
2. the Calendar of Meetings 2025/26

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CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**Wednesday, 28 February 2024**

REPORT TITLE:	CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25 AND 2025/26
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

This report recommends amends to the previously agreed dates for Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024/2025 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The report also recommends draft dates for the municipal year 2025/26 at Appendix 2.

This matter affects all wards. This is not a key decision.

The report contributes to the delivery of the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27 by ensuring that the Council's decision-making process is as effective as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Constitution and Standards Committee is requested to recommend to Council:

- (1) that the revised Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 be approved.
- (2) that the Calendar of Meetings 2025/26 be approved.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Council must approve and publish a Calendar of Meetings for each municipal year.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The other option was to produce a calendar of meetings for 2024/25 only, however it was felt to enable easier forward planning for Members and Officer a two year calendar of meetings would be produced, and that in future years calendars would be produced a year in advance with the upcoming calendar to be reviewed for any minor changes required.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the draft Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2023/24 and 2024/25 and provide details and reasons of any changes (if any) they would like to see to the draft Calendar.
- 3.2 Convening an extraordinary Council meeting or changing a scheduled meeting can often prove difficult given the demands placed upon Members. Matters are compounded by the membership of committees, etc being limited to a specific number of Members (and deputies) which impacts upon availability. It is therefore important that the Calendar of Meetings comprehensively captures Council meetings in such a way that it enables the Council to manage and discharge its functions in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- 3.3 The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee has been scheduled earlier in the cycle to enable it to appoint to the Joint Strategic Commissioning Board Sub-Committee, the members of which make up the Wirral Place Based Partnership Board which is planned to meet on 20 June.

Revisions to the Calendar

- 3.4 Monitoring the frequency of meetings of the Shareholder Board in recent years, it is proposed that the Board has two scheduled meetings per year and therefore meetings on 26th June 2024 and 13th November 2024 are removed. The two remaining meetings are proposed to be scheduled for 4.00pm instead of 10.00am to facilitate member attendance. Should matters require attention in between the planned meeting dates, Members may be asked to attend ad hoc meetings on rare occasions.
- 3.5 It is proposed that Council meeting is moved from 8th July 2024 to 22nd July 2024 to enable any referrals from Policy & Resources Committee on 10th July to be considered at Council in July and avoid unnecessary delay until the next meeting of Council in October. This means that Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee would be moved to Wednesday, 24th July.

- 3.6 It is proposed that Policy & Resources Committee is rescheduled from Wednesday 18th December to Wednesday 11th December to enable more time for any outcomes to be actioned prior to Christmas.
- 3.7 Meetings of the Wirral Place Based Partnership Board are to be scheduled for 10.00am, to address a drafting error in the previous calendar which showed a 2.00pm start time for some meetings.
- 3.8 The meeting of Planning Committee in January 2025 has been moved from Monday 13th January to Thursday 16th January at the request of the Chair, to align with the other meetings which are scheduled for Thursdays.
- 3.9 All proposed revisions to the 2024/25 calendar have been replicated in the draft 2025/26 calendar.
- 3.10 Dates are not included in the Calendar for Member training. A programme of dates will be drawn up by the Member Support Steering Group in due course and circulated to Members.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is considered good practice for the Council to publish a Calendar of Meetings in respect of each Municipal Year.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Council is required to ensure there are sufficient resources to administer all Council meetings in accordance with relevant legislation and the Council's Constitution.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 It is not possible to pre-empt or predict the exact number of Council meetings that are required and when they will need to take place. Additional Council meetings will be convened when necessary (and in accordance with the Council's Constitution) to ensure that the Council discharges its duties, obligations and responsibilities.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The development of the Committee Calendar and any suggested amendments to it has been informed by the discussions held at recent meetings of the Governance Working Group.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct environment or climate implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Revised Calendar of Committee Meetings 2024/25
Appendix 2 – Calendar of Committee Meetings 2025/26

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Constitution
Calendar of Meetings 2023/24

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Constitution and Standards Committee in accordance with Section (m) of its Terms of Reference, “to consider and make recommendations on such other matters as the Committee itself thinks appropriate or which are referred to it by Council, which further the aim of promoting and maintaining the highest standards of conduct within the Council.”

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council	20 March 2023
Constitution and Standards Committee	22 February 2023
Council	25 May 2022
Constitution and Standards Committee	17 February 2022
Council	22 March 2021
Constitution and Standards Committee	24 February 2021

2024/25 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

MAY 2024

Wednesday	1	
Thursday	2	Combined Authority Mayoral/ Police & Crime Commissioner Elections
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	
Monday	6	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	7	
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	
Tuesday	14	
Wednesday	15	Annual Council Part One
Thursday	16	
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	
Monday	20	
Tuesday	21	
Wednesday	22	Annual Council Part Two
Thursday	23	
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	
Sunday	26	
Monday	27	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	28	
Wednesday	29	
Thursday	30	
Friday	31	

JUNE 2024

Saturday	1	
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	
Tuesday	4	
Wednesday	5	Licensing Act Committee; Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Thursday	6	Planning Committee
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	Constitution & Standards Committee
Tuesday	11	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	12	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	13	
Friday	14	
Saturday	15	
Sunday	16	
Monday	17	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Tuesday	18	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Wednesday	19	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	20	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	Pensions Committee
Tuesday	25	Audit & Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	26	
Thursday	27	Planning Committee
Friday	28	
Saturday	29	
Sunday	30	

JULY 2024

Monday	1	
Tuesday	2	
Wednesday	3	
Thursday	4	
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	
Sunday	7	
Monday	8	
Tuesday	9	Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub Committee (10am)
Wednesday	10	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	11	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	
Sunday	14	
Monday	15	
Tuesday	16	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	17	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	18	Health & Well Being Board (2.00pm) Planning Committee
Friday	19	
Saturday	20	
Sunday	21	
Monday	22	Council
Tuesday	23	Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Wednesday	24	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Thursday	25	Council Reserve
Friday	26	
Saturday	27	
Sunday	28	
Monday	29	
Tuesday	30	
Wednesday	31	

AUGUST 2024

Thursday	1	
Friday	2	
Saturday	3	
Sunday	4	
Monday	5	
Tuesday	6	
Wednesday	7	
Thursday	8	
Friday	9	
Saturday	10	
Sunday	11	
Monday	12	
Tuesday	13	
Wednesday	14	
Thursday	15	Planning Committee
Friday	16	
Saturday	17	
Sunday	18	
Monday	19	
Tuesday	20	
Wednesday	21	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Thursday	22	
Friday	23	
Saturday	24	
Sunday	25	
Monday	26	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	27	
Wednesday	28	
Thursday	29	
Friday	30	
Saturday	31	

SEPTEMBER 2024

Sunday	1	
Monday	2	
Tuesday	3	
Wednesday	4	Shareholder Board (4.00pm)
Thursday	5	Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	
Sunday	8	
Monday	9	
Tuesday	10	
Wednesday	11	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	12	Planning Committee
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	
Sunday	15	
Monday	16	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	17	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	18	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Thursday	19	Health & Well Being Board(2.00pm) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	
Sunday	22	
Monday	23	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Tuesday	24	Pensions Committee
Wednesday	25	
Thursday	26	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Constitution & Standards Committee
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	
Sunday	29	
Monday	30	Group Meetings

OCTOBER 2024

Tuesday	1	
Wednesday	2	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	3	
Friday	4	
Saturday	5	
Sunday	6	
Monday	7	Council
Tuesday	8	
Wednesday	9	Planning Committee
Thursday	10	Council Reserve
Friday	11	
Saturday	12	
Sunday	13	
Monday	14	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	15	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	16	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	17	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	18	
Saturday	19	
Sunday	20	
Monday	21	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Tuesday	22	Audit & Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	23	Licensing Act Committee
Thursday	24	
Friday	25	
Saturday	26	
Sunday	27	
Monday	28	
Tuesday	29	
Wednesday	30	
Thursday	31	

NOVEMBER 2024

Friday	1	
Saturday	2	
Sunday	3	
Monday	4	
Tuesday	5	
Wednesday	6	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	7	Planning Committee
Friday	8	
Saturday	9	
Sunday	10	
Monday	11	
Tuesday	12	
Wednesday	13	
Thursday	14	Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Friday	15	
Saturday	16	
Sunday	17	
Monday	18	
Tuesday	19	
Wednesday	20	Constitution & Standards Committee
Thursday	21	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Friday	22	
Saturday	23	
Sunday	24	
Monday	25	Group Meetings
Tuesday	26	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	27	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	28	Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	29	
Saturday	30	

DECEMBER 2024

Sunday	1	
Monday	2	Council
Tuesday	3	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Wednesday	4	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Thursday	5	Council Reserve
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	
Sunday	8	
Monday	9	Pensions Committee
Tuesday	10	
Wednesday	11	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	12	Health & Well Being Board(2.00pm) Planning Committee
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	
Sunday	15	
Monday	16	
Tuesday	17	
Wednesday	18	
Thursday	19	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	
Sunday	22	
Monday	23	
Tuesday	24	
Wednesday	25	BANK HOLIDAY
Thursday	26	BANK HOLIDAY
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	
Sunday	29	
Monday	30	
Tuesday	31	

JANUARY 2025

Wednesday	1	BANK HOLIDAY
Thursday	2	
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	
Monday	6	
Tuesday	7	
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	
Tuesday	14	Audit & Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	15	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	16	Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub Committee (10am) Planning Committee
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	
Monday	20	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	21	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	22	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	23	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	
Sunday	26	
Monday	27	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Tuesday	28	
Wednesday	29	Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Thursday	30	
Friday	31	

FEBRUARY 2025

Saturday	1	
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	
Tuesday	4	
Wednesday	5	Charitable Trust Sub Committee (2pm)
Thursday	6	Planning Committee
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	
Tuesday	11	
Wednesday	12	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	13	
Friday	14	
Saturday	15	
Sunday	16	
Monday	17	Group Meetings
Tuesday	18	
Wednesday	19	
Thursday	20	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Constitution & Standards Committee
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	Budget Council
Tuesday	25	
Wednesday	26	Shareholder Board (4.00pm)
Thursday	27	Budget Council Reserve
Friday	28	

MARCH 2025

Saturday	1	
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	4	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	5	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	6	Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	Group Meetings
Tuesday	11	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Wednesday	12	
Thursday	13	Health & Well Being Board (2.00pm) Planning Committee
Friday	14	
Saturday	15	
Sunday	16	
Monday	17	Council
Tuesday	18	Pensions Committee
Wednesday	19	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	20	Council Reserve
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub Committee(10am) Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Tuesday	25	Audit and Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	26	
Thursday	27	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Friday	28	
Saturday	29	
Sunday	30	
Monday	31	

APRIL 2025

Tuesday	1	
Wednesday	2	
Thursday	3	
Friday	4	
Saturday	5	
Sunday	6	
Monday	7	
Tuesday	8	
Wednesday	9	
Thursday	10	
Friday	11	
Saturday	12	
Sunday	13	
Monday	14	
Tuesday	15	
Wednesday	16	
Thursday	17	Planning Committee
Friday	18	BANK HOLIDAY
Saturday	19	
Sunday	20	
Monday	21	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	22	
Wednesday	23	
Thursday	24	
Friday	25	
Saturday	26	
Sunday	27	
Monday	28	
Tuesday	29	
Wednesday	30	

2025/26 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

MAY 2025

Thursday	1	
Friday	2	
Saturday	3	
Sunday	4	
Monday	5	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	6	
Wednesday	7	
Thursday	8	
Friday	9	
Saturday	10	
Sunday	11	
Monday	12	
Tuesday	13	
Wednesday	14	Annual Council Part One
Thursday	15	
Friday	16	
Saturday	17	
Sunday	18	
Monday	19	
Tuesday	20	
Wednesday	21	Annual Council Part Two
Thursday	22	
Friday	23	
Saturday	24	
Sunday	25	
Monday	26	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday Half Term	27	
Wednesday	28	
Thursday	29	
Friday	30	

JUNE 2025

Saturday	31	
Sunday	1	
Monday	2	
Tuesday	3	
Wednesday	4	Licensing Act Committee; Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Thursday	5	Planning Committee
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	
Sunday	8	
Monday	9	Constitution & Standards Committee
Tuesday	10	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	11	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	12	
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	
Sunday	15	
Monday	16	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Tuesday	17	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Wednesday	18	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	19	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	
Sunday	22	
Monday	23	Pensions Committee
Tuesday	24	Audit & Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	25	
Thursday	26	Planning Committee
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	
Sunday	29	
Monday	30	Group Meetings

JULY 2025

Tuesday	1	
Wednesday	2	
Thursday	3	
Friday	4	
Saturday	5	
Sunday	6	
Monday	7	
Tuesday	8	Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub Committee (10am)
Wednesday	9	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	10	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Friday	11	
Saturday	12	
Sunday	13	
Monday	14	
Tuesday	15	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	16	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	17	Health & Well Being Board (2.00pm) Planning Committee
Friday	18	
Saturday	19	
Sunday	20	
Monday	21	Council
Tuesday	22	Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Wednesday	23	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Summer		
Thursday	24	Council Reserve
Friday	25	
Saturday	26	
Sunday	27	
Monday	28	
Tuesday	29	
Wednesday	30	
Thursday	31	

AUGUST 2025

Friday	1	
Saturday	2	
Sunday	3	
Monday	4	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	5	
Wednesday	6	
Thursday	7	
Friday	8	
Saturday	9	
Sunday	10	
Monday	11	
Tuesday	12	
Wednesday	13	
Thursday	14	Planning Committee
Friday	15	
Saturday	16	
Sunday	17	
Monday	18	
Tuesday	19	
Wednesday	20	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Thursday	21	
Friday	22	
Saturday	23	
Sunday	24	
Monday	25	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	26	
Wednesday	27	
Thursday	28	
Friday	29	
Saturday	30	
Sunday	31	

SEPTEMBER 2025

Monday	1	
Tuesday	2	
Wednesday	3	Shareholder Board (4pm)
Thursday	4	Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	
Sunday	7	
Monday	8	
Tuesday	9	
Wednesday	10	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	11	Planning Committee
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	
Sunday	14	
Monday	15	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	16	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	17	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Thursday	18	Health & Wellbeing Board (2.00pm) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	19	
Saturday	20	
Sunday	21	
Monday	22	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Tuesday	23	Pensions Committee
Wednesday	24	
Thursday	25	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Constitution & Standards Committee
Friday	26	
Saturday	27	
Sunday	28	
Monday	29	Group Meetings
Tuesday	30	

OCTOBER 2025

Wednesday	1	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	2	
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	
Monday	6	Council
Tuesday	7	
Wednesday	8	Planning Committee
Thursday	9	Council Reserve
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	14	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	15	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	16	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	
Monday	20	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Tuesday	21	Audit & Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	22	Licensing Act Committee
Thursday	23	
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	
Sunday	26	
Monday	27	
Tuesday	28	
Wednesday	29	
Thursday	30	
Friday	31	

NOVEMBER 2025

Saturday	1	
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	
Tuesday	4	
Wednesday	5	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	6	Planning Committee
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	
Tuesday	11	
Wednesday	12	
Thursday	13	Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Friday	14	
Saturday	15	
Sunday	16	
Monday	17	
Tuesday	18	
Wednesday	19	Constitution & Standards Committee
Thursday	20	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	Group Meetings
Tuesday	25	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	26	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	27	Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	28	
Saturday	29	
Sunday	30	

DECEMBER 2025

Monday	1	Council
Tuesday	2	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Wednesday	3	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Thursday	4	Council Reserve
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	
Sunday	7	
Monday	8	Pensions Committee
Tuesday	9	
Wednesday	10	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	11	Health & Wellbeing Board(2.00pm) Planning Committee
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	
Sunday	14	
Monday	15	
Tuesday	16	
Wednesday	17	
Thursday	18	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Friday	19	
Saturday	20	
Sunday	21	
Monday	22	
Tuesday	23	
Wednesday	24	
Thursday	25	BANK HOLIDAY
Friday	26	BANK HOLIDAY
Saturday	27	
Sunday	28	
Monday	29	
Tuesday	30	
Wednesday	31	

JANUARY 2026

Thursday	1	BANK HOLIDAY
Friday	2	
Saturday	3	
Sunday	4	
Monday	5	
Tuesday	6	
Wednesday	7	
Thursday	9	
Friday	9	
Saturday	10	
Sunday	11	
Monday	12	
Tuesday	13	Audit & Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	14	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	15	Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub Committee (10am) Planning Committee
Friday	16	
Saturday	17	
Sunday	18	
Monday	19	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	20	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	21	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	22	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	23	
Saturday	24	
Sunday	25	
Monday	26	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Tuesday	27	
Wednesday	28	Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Thursday	29	
Friday	30	
Saturday	31	

FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday	1	
Monday	2	
Tuesday	3	
Wednesday	4	Charitable Trust Sub Committee (2pm)
Thursday	5	Planning Committee
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	
Sunday	8	
Monday	9	
Tuesday	10	
Wednesday	11	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	12	
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	
Sunday	15	
Monday	16	Group Meetings
Tuesday	17	
Wednesday	18	
Thursday	19	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am) Constitution & Standards Committee
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	
Sunday	22	
Monday	23	Budget Council
Tuesday	24	
Wednesday	25	Shareholder Board (4pm)
Thursday	26	Budget Council Reserve
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	

MARCH 2026

Sunday	1	
Monday	2	Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
Tuesday	3	Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee
Wednesday	4	Children, Young People & Education Committee
Thursday	5	Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	
Sunday	8	
Monday	9	Group Meetings
Tuesday	10	Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee
Wednesday	11	
Thursday	12	Health & Wellbeing Board (2.00pm) Planning Committee
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	
Sunday	15	
Monday	16	Council
Tuesday	17	Pensions Committee
Wednesday	18	Policy & Resources Committee
Thursday	19	Council Reserve
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	
Sunday	22	
Monday	23	Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub Committee(10am) Regulatory & General Purposes Committee
Tuesday	24	Audit and Risk Management Committee
Wednesday	25	
Thursday	26	Wirral Place Based Partnership Board (10.00am)
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	
Sunday	29	
Monday	30	
Tuesday	31	

APRIL 2026

Wednesday	1	
Thursday	2	
Friday	3	BANK HOLIDAY
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	
Monday	6	BANK HOLIDAY
Tuesday	7	
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	
Tuesday	14	
Wednesday	15	
Thursday	16	Planning Committee
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	
Monday	20	
Tuesday	21	
Wednesday	22	
Thursday	23	
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	
Sunday	26	
Monday	27	
Tuesday	28	
Wednesday	29	
Thursday	30	

MINUTE EXTRACT

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday 15 January 2024

40 ARMC ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual report for 2022-23, which was prepared by the respective Chairs of the Committee in consultation with internal audit and summarised work undertaken by the committee during the period in line with best professional practice. Resolved – That the Annual Report for 2022-23 be approved and submitted to Council.

Resolved – That the Annual Report for 2022-23 be approved and submitted to Council.

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AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY 15 JANUARY 2024

REPORT TITLE:	ANNUAL ARMC REPORT 2022-23
REPORT OF:	CHIEF INTERNAL AUDITOR

REPORT SUMMARY

To comply with best professional practice the Audit and Risk Management Committee is required to complete an annual report to Cabinet on the work undertaken by the Committee.

Attached at Appendix A is the Annual ARMC Report prepared by the respective Chairs of the Committee during the period in consultation with Internal Audit.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough. It is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is recommended to approve the Annual ARMC Report for 2022-23 and submit this to Council.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To comply with best practice identified in the CIPFA publication 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police'.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Issued amended regulations in 2006, to the 2003 Accounts and Audit Regulations – 'The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 2.2 One of the amended regulations relates specifically to the systems of internal audit in operation and requires bodies to regularly review their systems of internal audit, and for the findings to be considered by a committee of the body, or by the body as a whole.
- 2.3 Advice from CIPFA, incorporated into the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards includes the assertion that the "systems of internal audit" can be considered to include the role and effectiveness of the Audit Committee which therefore should be assessed and evaluated. As part of this requirement there is an expectation that the 'Audit Committee' prepares an annual report that evaluates and summarises the activity of the committee during the year and that this is presented to Council.
- 2.4 An annual report for 2022-23 has been prepared by the Chairs in consultation with Internal Audit evaluating the activity of the Committee during the year and is attached at Appendix A for consideration and approval by the Members.
- 2.5 In addition, a self-assessment exercise is undertaken annually of the Committee against the CIPFA best practice requirements and presented to the October meeting of the Committee for consideration.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 No other options considered appropriate for the production of the annual report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Potential failure of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to comply with best professional practice and thereby not function in an efficient and effective manner.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Members of this Committee are consulted throughout the process of preparing and delivering the annual report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report have no direct implications for equality. However, the delivery of an effective Audit and Risk Management Committee will assist in ensuring that the Council, its finances, and service provision are effectively managed and governed aiding the advancement of equality.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2/greenhouse gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report have no direct implications for community wealth. However, the delivery of an effective internal audit service will assist in ensuring that the Council, its finances, and service provision are effectively managed and governed aiding the advancement of economic, social and environmental justice for all residents.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Mark P Niblock**
Chief Internal Auditor
telephone: 0151 666 3432
email: markniblock@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix A Annual ARMC Report 2022-23

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006
CIPFA: Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police
Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Audit and Risk Management Committee in accordance with Section B of its Terms of Reference.

(b) Internal Audit and Internal Control

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Audit and Risk Management Committee	Report presented annually to Committee.

APPENDIX A

Audit and Risk Management Committee

Annual Report 2022-23

Page 73

Councillor Jenny Johnson, current Chair of ARMC
Councillor Simon Mountney, Chair of ARMC 2022

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1. Foreword

I am pleased to present the Audit and Risk Management Committee's Annual Report for 2022-23. It records the activities undertaken by the Committee across a wide range of control, risk and corporate governance matters.

During the year, the Committee met on 5 occasions and received reports in connection with the full range of issues that fall within its remit. This report indicates the breadth of the Audit and Risk Management Committee's activities in ensuring that every aspect of the council's work should be compliant with standards and transparent to its stakeholders.

I strongly believe that this Annual Report demonstrates the immense value that the Committee brings to the Council and the public in ensuring that improvements to the governance arrangements of the authority are being delivered. As the Chair I can clearly see first-hand the significant contribution that the Audit and Risk Management Committee makes to the improvement and development of operational standards and protocols across a wide range of governance areas particularly during what has clearly been a very challenging year. Some of the corporate developments and improvements that the Committee were directly involved with during the year included greater engagement with the Chairs of service committees and the introduction of risk workshops for these to further enhance their ability to challenge officers on the effectiveness of directorate risk registers and actions being taken to mitigate risks and improve overall decision making.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution that the Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the supporting officers have made during the past year.

By the Chair of the Audit & Risk Management Committee during 2022-23
Councillor Simon Mountney

2. Background

2.1 What drives Governance Policy

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Effective corporate governance is a fundamental feature of any successful public sector organisation.

A sound corporate governance framework involves accountability to service users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which authorities take decisions, and lead and control their functions, to achieve their objectives. It thereby provides an opportunity to demonstrate the positive elements of an authority's business and to promote public confidence.

Wirral Council has adopted the revised local Code of Corporate Governance.

2.2 Why do we need an Audit Committee

While there is no statutory obligation to have such an arrangement, Audit Committees are widely recognised as a core component of effective governance and therefore reflect good practice. Wirral's Audit and Risk Management Committee is properly constituted and, as such, is given sufficient authority and resources by the Council. In effect, the Committee has the right to obtain all the information it considers necessary and to consult directly with senior managers. In line with best practice from both the public and private sectors, the Audit and Risk Management Committee can report its observations and concerns directly to Council.

A local authority has a duty to ensure that it is fulfilling its responsibility for adequate and effective internal control, risk management, and governance, as well as the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of its activities. The Audit and Risk Management Committee has a key role in overseeing and assessing the internal control, risk management, and corporate governance arrangements and advising the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

2.3 What does an Audit Committee do

The Audit and Risk Management Committee's main responsibilities are to oversee the Council's corporate governance and finance arrangements, the work of internal audit, and the Council's response to external audit and other external inspections.

This purpose is reflected in the committee's terms of reference which are reviewed and adopted each year (Attached at Appendix 1).

2.4. How do Officers Support the Committee?

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is supported by:

- The Monitoring Officer who is required by law to ensure that the Council acts within its legal powers at all times; and,
- The Director of Finance, as Section 151 Officer who is responsible under the law for ensuring the proper administration of the council's financial affairs.
- The Chief Internal Auditor who has a key role to play in supporting the Committee because of the importance of the Internal Audit service to governance.
- Any other officer of the Council as required.

3. 2022-23 Financial Year

This Annual Report for 2022-23 produced by the Audit and Risk Management Committee has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA best practice publication '*Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police*'. The report demonstrates how the Audit and Risk Management Committee has fulfilled its terms of reference during a very difficult year and how it is fully committed to helping to improve the Council's governance and control environments during what should prove to be a very challenging year ahead.

The committee's activities during the year were designed to make a positive contribution to the continual improvement of governance arrangements across the Council, as well as performing the statutory roles as identified in the Constitution.

4. Some Key Information

4.1. Audit and Risk Management Committee Membership

During 2022-23 the Audit and Risk Management Committee had the following Members:

Councillor Simon Mountney – Chair
Councillor Stuart Kelly – Vice Chair
Councillor Angie Davies - Spokesperson
Councillor Jason Walsh - Spokesperson
Councillor Tony Cox

Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde
Independent Member – Joanne Byrne
Independent Member – Peter McAlistar

4.2. Key Features of the Audit Committee and its Operation

The Committee meets CIPFA's definition of best practice as illustrated below:

Best Practice	Expectation	Met	Comment
Independence	Independent from the executive and scrutiny	√	The Committee reports to the Council
Number of Members	Minimum of 3 to 5 members	√	The Committee has 8 Members
Number of meetings	Aligned to business needs	√	The Committee meets 4 times a year.
Co-option	To be considered relative to skills	√	Training is currently provided to increase Members' skills.
Terms of Reference	Accord with suggested best practice	√	The Committee has adopted the CIPFA recommended model.
Skills and training	Members have sufficient skills for the job	√	General and specific training is provided annually to increase Members' skills.

4.3. Meetings and Attendance

The Audit Committee normally met on 5 occasions during the year.

Attendance by Members and approved deputies was over 90%.

5. Core Activity During 2022-23

5.1. Terms of Reference

The Audit and Risk Management Committee's Terms of Reference are comprehensive, comply with best practice, cover all key areas and are attached at Appendix 1 to this annual report. The Committee's work and outcomes in each of its areas of responsibility are summarised in the following subsections.

Internal Audit

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Approved the Chief Internal Auditor's Audit Plan,
- Considered regular reports produced by the Chief Internal Auditor, highlighting internal audit work completed, internal audit performance against key indicators and any significant issues arising during the period,
- Approved amendments to reporting arrangements including development of the summary reports from Internal Audit,
- Considered the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report and assurance opinion on the Council's control environment,
- Considered reviews of the effectiveness of the systems of internal audit,
- Ensured internal and external audit plans were complementary and provided optimum use of the total audit resource,
- Received updates on the Internal Audit Counter Fraud Teams' remit and activities undertaken,
- Received and considered updates on the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards,
- Considered reports on audit investigations conducted as appropriate,
- Considered and approved revisions to Chief Internal Auditors Audit Plan.
- Considered the outcome of the Internal Audit Quality Assurance Improvement Programme assessment.
- Reviewed the Council's progress on all internal audit recommendations on a regular basis and asked managers to explain progress where appropriate, thereby holding them to account,
- Approved the revised Internal Audit Strategy and Charter,
- Received progress updates from relevant Senior Managers regarding audit recommendations implementation,

We continue to provide support to the Internal Audit service to ensure management is responsive to recommendations made and agreed.

External Audit

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Considered the external auditor's Audit Plan of Work for Wirral Council,
- Considered the external auditor's Audit Plan of Work for Merseyside Pension Fund,
- Considered progress against the plans presented by the external auditor
- Received and considered all external audit findings and inspection reports issued in the year and consider management's response to them, ensuring robust and thorough responses,
- Reviewed the external audit Committee Update reports and took appropriate actions in response to issues presented,
- Reviewed the Council's progress on all external audit and inspection recommendations on a regular basis and ask managers to explain progress where appropriate, thereby holding them to account,
- Received and considered all of the external auditors reports on the Merseyside Pension Fund,
- Considered the external auditor's Annual Audit Letter.

We continue to provide support to external audit to ensure management is responsive to recommendations made and agreed.

Risk Management

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Considered regular reports on the Departmental and Corporate Risk Registers and challenged policy and process,
- Provided significant input to the development of the risk registers through Member workshops,
- Considered reports on the proposed development of corporate Risk Management arrangements,
- Promoted Risk Management across the Council and oversaw the development of Service Committee Risk Workshops,
- Supported the development and implementation a programme of risk training for officers and Members,

- Considered regular reports on Corporate Risk Management,

We continue to provide support to promote effective Risk Management policy and procedures across the Council and ensure best practice is achieved.

Internal Control and Governance

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Agreed the Council's Annual Governance Statement,
- Considered reports on progress made to address significant governance issues identified in the AGS,
- Supported the ongoing development of a Mersey region Counter Fraud Group,
- Engaged with and supported the annual Counter Fraud Awareness Week initiative,
- Supported work undertaken as part of the Cabinet Offices' National Fraud Initiative,
- Considered and supported amendments to the Council's counter fraud arrangements,
- Approved the revised Code of Corporate Governance,
- Considered a report on Regeneration schemes assurance,
- Considered reports on Contract Procedure Rules compliance,
- Approved updates to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules,

The Annual Governance Statement is a key document which summarises the Council's governance arrangements and the effectiveness of the arrangements during the year.

Accounts

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Agreed the Council's accounting policies,
- Agreed the Annual Statement of Accounts,

- Received and considered the external auditor’s report on the accounts, and ensured that the Council responds to the auditor’s comments,
- Considered a report by the Director of Finance on the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision for financing capital schemes,
- Received and considered the Council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy,
- Agreed the annual Merseyside Pension Funds accounts,
- Received and consider the external auditor’s report on the MPF accounts and responded to comments,

The Audit and Risk Management Committee received regular reports on the Council’s financial arrangements in the context of the I challenges facing the Council.

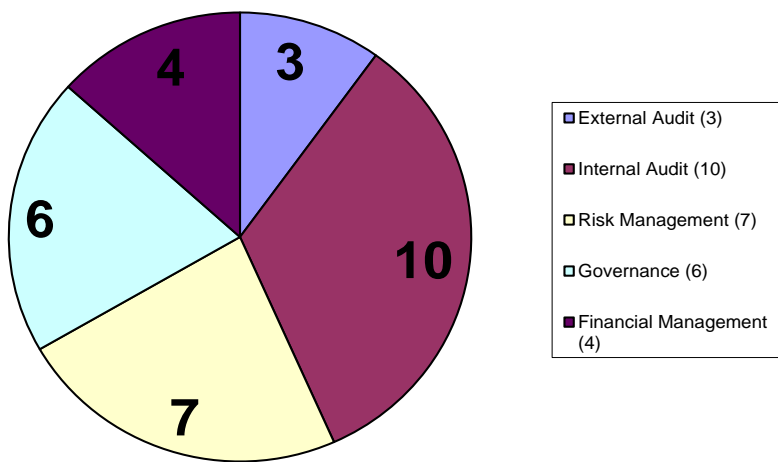
Specific Issues

The Audit and Risk Management Committee also considered reports and presentations on the following specific issues which arose in the period:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000,
- Whistleblowing Policy,
- ICT Continuity Controls,
- Hoylake Golf Resort,
- Hybrid Working,
- Information Governance.

To give a flavour of our business during the year, the following shows the types and numbers of reports considered between April 2022 and March 2023:

5.2. Numbers & Types of Reports Considered by the Audit Committee.



6. Other Activities

During the year, the Committee demonstrated its commitment to good governance by:

- i. Overseeing the implementation of actions to address significant governance issues identified in the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23;
- ii. Overseeing developments designed to improve risk management arrangements;
- iii. Referring matters to other bodies for attention as appropriate;
- iv. Asking Chief Officers to attend as appropriate and present reports on issues identified which affected governance.

7. Outcomes

The Audit and Risk Management Committee aims to focus on adding value through its activity. By concentrating on outcomes the Committee can identify the benefits of its work. In particular this year the Committee:

- Oversaw work on the Statement of Accounts;
- Encouraged and presided over a strengthening of the control environment, specifically by overseeing various targeted reviews and the production of the Annual Governance Statement;
- Encouraged and presided over developments and improvements to strengthen the delivery of the Internal Audit service to ensure continued compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards;
- Presided over systems for routinely reporting actions taken by officers in relation to items identified as being significant governance issues in the Annual Governance Statement;

- Encouraged a strengthening of the Council's overall control environment; specifically by overseeing various targeted reviews and the production of and challenge to the Annual Governance Statement;
- Challenged risk management arrangements and facilitated the development of improvements in this area including the strengthening of the Member Risk Management workshops across all service Committees.
- Ongoing contribution to the development of improved governance in operation over the Council's procurement arrangements through oversight and challenge including compliance with corporate policy and procedure;

In addition, individual Members and the Audit Committee collectively continued to develop and learn about our roles including development and attendance at professional training sessions targeted specifically at Audit Committee Members, and enabling us to deliver our roles more effectively.

8. Plans for 2023-24

The Committee will continue to work more closely with officers to help to address any identified issues in what promises again to be a very challenging and difficult environment. Our priorities for 2023-24 are to implement all the developments mentioned as well as continuing to meet our duties as specified in the Constitution by developing and building on our current status as well as operating more proactively to address all challenges faced as well as implementing any new requirements as they arise.

For 2023-24 we will:

- Provide sufficient challenge to the Council to ensure that standards are continuously met, and the demanding requirements of the external inspection and assessment regime are achieved,
- Oversee reviews of the Council's governance arrangements in operation in key risk areas to ensure that the Council adopts the very latest best practice in key areas such as operational performance and compliance,
- Commission reviews and reports on the effectiveness of the Council systems in key areas,
- Support the work of Internal and External Audit and ensure appropriate responses are given to their recommendations,
- Contribute to the development of key corporate operations including Risk Management and Business Continuity,
- Continue to ensure that all aspects of the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards are complied with,
- Continue to help the Council to manage the risk of fraud and corruption by supporting the work of Internal Audit and colleagues in this area,
- Continue to develop the Wirral Council Audit and Risk Management Committee to review risk, partnerships' and regeneration issues and safeguard public sector interests,
- Oversee the development of audit plans to evaluate and test controls in respect of services delivered either by trading companies run by the Council or on behalf of them,

Councillor Jenny Johnson
Wirral Council Audit and Risk Committee

9. Appendix 1.

Audit and Risk Management Committee – Terms of Reference

10 AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

10.1 Composition:

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation, in respect of which:

- (a) The membership of the Audit and Risk Management Committee may not include Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, a Chair of a Policy and Services Committee or any other member of the Policy and Resources Committee.
- (b) Members may not consider decisions as part of the of the Audit and Risk Management Committee that they have made as a member of another Committee. In this case, they should declare an interest and leave the meeting room. If a member feels that there is a particular reason why he or she should participate, a dispensation must be sought from the Constitution and Standards Committee or Monitoring Officer.
- (c) The Committee will in addition include a person who is not a Member or officer of the Council who shall be a co-opted member of the Committee entitled to speak but not vote at meetings.

10.2 Terms of Reference

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is a key component of Wirral Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The Committee provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is charged by full Council to:-

- (a) Governance
 - (i) Consider the Annual Governance Statement, and be satisfied that this statement is comprehensive, properly reflects the risk and internal control environment, including the system of internal audit, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control, and includes an agreed action plan for improvements where necessary.
- (b) Internal Audit and Internal Control
 - (i) With Chief Officers, to provide proactive leadership and direction on audit governance issues and champion audit and internal control throughout the Council.
 - (ii) Consider annually the effectiveness of the system of internal audit including Internal Audit Charter, Strategy, Plan of work and performance and that those arrangements are compliant with all applicable statutes and regulations, including the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note.
 - (iii) Consider the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and a summary of internal audit activity which include an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal controls including risk management, any corporately significant issues arising, and receive assurance that action has been taken as necessary.

- (iv) Consider regular summary reports on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and actions in hand as a result of internal audit activity.
 - (v) Consider reports showing progress against the audit plan and proposed amendments to the audit plan.
 - (vi) Ensure there are effective relationships between internal audit and external audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.
- (c) Risk Management & Control
- (i) Provide proactive leadership and direction on risk management governance issues and champion risk management throughout the Council and ensure that the Full Council is kept sufficiently informed to enable it to approve the Council's Risk Management Policy and Framework and that proper insurance exists where appropriate.
 - (ii) Consider the effectiveness of the system of risk management arrangements.
 - (iii) Consider an annual report and quarterly reports with respect to risk management including, an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, any corporately significant issues arising, and receive assurance that action has been taken as necessary.
 - (iv) Receive assurances that action is being taken on risk related issues identified by both internal and external auditors and other inspectors.
 - (v) Independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk.
 - (vi) Report to full Council as appropriate.
- (d) Anti-Fraud and Corruption
- (i) Provide proactive leadership and direction on Anti-Fraud and Corruption and champion Anti-Fraud and Corruption throughout the Council.
 - (ii) Consider the effectiveness of the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements.
 - (iii) Consider an annual report and other such reports, including an annual plan on activity with respect to Anti-Fraud and Corruption performance and receive assurances that action is being taken where necessary.
 - (iv) To be appraised of any steps arising from Whistleblowing investigations and to ensure appropriate actions are being taken and reported.

- (e) Annual Statement of Accounts
 - (i) Consider the external auditor's reports and opinions, relevant requirements of the International Standards on Auditing and any other reports to members with respect to the Accounts, including the Merseyside Pension Fund and approve the Accounts on behalf of the Council and report required actions to the Council. Monitor management action in response to issues raised by the external auditor.
 - (ii) Consider the External Auditors Annual Governance Report and approve the Letter of Representation with respect to the Accounts and endorse the action plan contained in this Report.
- (f) External Audit
 - (i) Consider any other reports of external audit and other inspection agencies.
 - (ii) Ensure there are effective relationships between external audit and internal audit.
 - (iii) To liaise with the Public Sector Audit Appointments over the appointment of the Council's external auditors and make recommendations to Council.
- (g) Merseyside Pension Fund
 - (i) Following presentation to the Pensions Committee and with due regard to any comments and observations made, consider the draft Accounts of the Merseyside Pension Fund and authorise the publication and release of these accounts to the external auditors for the audit by the statutory deadline.
- (h) Treasury Management
 - (i) Consider the effectiveness of the governance, control and risk management arrangements for Treasury Management and ensure that they meet best practice.
- (i) Partnerships and other bodies
 - (i) To deal with any audit or ethical standards issues which may arise in relation to partnership working, joint committees and other local authorities or bodies.
 - (ii) Ensure that there are effective governance arrangements in place for Wirral Borough Council's wholly owned limited companies and trading vehicles.
 - (iii) Receive and review the financial statements and dividend policies of any Wirral Borough Council limited companies and to consider recommending corrective action where appropriate.

- (j) Administration
 - (i) Review the Committee's own terms of reference no less frequently than annually and where appropriate make recommendations to the Council for changes.
 - (ii) Ensure members of the committee have sufficient training to effectively undertake the duties of this committee.
 - (iii) Consider the Annual report of the Chair of the Committee.

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 November 2023

Present:

Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors	J Robinson	JE Green
	J Williamson	H Cameron
	P Gilchrist	S Mountney
	EA Grey	L Rennie
	A Davies	P Cleary
	S Powell-Wilde	H Gorman
	T Jones	J Bird

67 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

The Chair then proposed a change to the order of business. In order to allow Members to discuss agenda item 6, Community Asset Transfer in an exempt session and to create as little disruption to the meeting as possible, he proposed that this item be considered last. This was agreed by assent.

68 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

69 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Tony Jones and Councillor Pat Cleary declared a non-prejudicial interest by virtue of their membership on the Town Team Board.

70 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

Statements were received from Lynne Howe and Matt Gibbs relating to the closure of Woodchurch Leisure Centre.

71 **NEW COUNCIL PLAN**

The Head of Corporate Office presented the report which set out a new Council Plan for the four-year electoral term 2023 to 2027, following the local government elections in May 2023

The Council Plan is the primary document in the Council's Policy framework and had been developed to align with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

In this regard, it supported the Council's progress towards financial stability and continuous improvement in response to the External Assurance Review commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in November 2021 and Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge in April 2022.

The new Council Plan built upon and replaced the existing Wirral Plan 2021-26 which was approved by Council 6 September 2021 and refreshed on 11 July 2022. It superseded the Council's Improvement Plan as approved by Council 11 July 2022. The new plan acted as a single plan for the organisation, articulated a vision and priorities for the upcoming four years and delivered in line with the needs of residents. Members were informed that the new Council Plan transformed and modernised the Council to maximise opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Members queried the measurability of the framework for Community Wealth Building and were assured that all the measures contained within the Community Wealth Building Strategy would be brought forward as part of the Council Plan. Also discussed was the progress made in regards to the Council's improvement plan which had been noted by the Independent Assurance Panel. Members wished it noted their thanks to officers and all Members for their hard work, engagement, and collaboration during the development of the Council Plan.

Resolved – that the new Council Plan be recommended to Council for approval at its next meeting on 4 December.

72 **BIRKENHEAD, WALLASEY AND NEW FERRY SIMPLIFICATION PATHFINDER PILOT BOARD**

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report which provided an update on progression to establish a successor to the Town Deal Board, which reflected the wider role of the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot and built upon the positive role of the Town Deal Board to date.

This was further to and a requirement of the submission of the Councils Investment Plan ancillary the DLUHC Simplification Pathfinder Pilot. The successor body was to be known as the Birkenhead Wallasey and New Ferry Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board.

Members were informed that Councillor Pat Cleary wished to move an amendment.

Councillor Cleary spoke to his amendment and discussed the value of the previously established Town Deal Board, noting that it was an effective forum for scrutinising and improving proposals and that the expansion due to the pathfinder pilot was a positive step. Councillor Cleary commented that there was a good template in the Town Deal Board but felt it should be extended to include new areas now included within the levelling up funds.

A discussion was had on the guidance surrounding the Town Deal Board, and the merits of a private chair, conflicts of interest for board Members and additional funding awarded for Liscard Town Centre. Also discussed was the need for all parties on the Council to be represented on the Pathfinder Pilot Board, given that the Council would be an accountable body.

To consider the motion, the meeting adjourned at **6:52pm**

The meeting reconvened at **7:00pm**

A motion was then formally put by Councillor Pat Cleary, seconded by Councillor Jo Bird

'Committee recognises the positive work of the Towns Deal Board to date. Taking account of the clear guidance from DHLUC in establishing a successor Pathfinder Board this committee agrees;

- *The successor body would be known as the Wirral Pathfinder Pilot Board*
- *To retain the existing membership of the Towns Deal Board within the Wirral Pathfinder Pilot Board;*
- *To expand the membership of the new Board to include new geographic areas;*
- *To delegate to the Director for Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Chair and spokespersons of P&R the additional membership of the Wirral Pathfinder Pilot Board and the selection of Chair from the private sector membership of the new Board as per guidance from DHLUC'*

The motion was then put and lost (4:11).

On a motion by Councillor Jeff Green, Seconded by Councillor Leslie Rennie it was,

Resolved – that the indicative Birkenhead Wallasey and New Ferry Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board membership and terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 to this report be approved with the following additions,

- (a) membership of the board be adjusted to include ex-officio Members from the Conservative and Liberal Democratic groups. Membership of the board should also be extended to Liscard Ward Members should that become appropriate.**
- (b) the Director of Law and Governance to review the terms of reference in relation to the declaration of interest in consultation with the chair and group spokespersons.**

73 **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PARTNER**

The Head of ICT and Digital presented the report. Members were informed that Digital transformation supported a customer focussed, digital-first approach to customer experiences, business processes and operations.

Digital transformation was about embedding and adopting technologies across the Council to deliver change and efficiencies.

Members were reminded that on 1 December 2021, the Policy and Resources Committee approved the Strategic Change Programme which had set out the Council's plans for delivering the objectives within the Wirral Plan and the required efficiencies to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). As detailed within the report for Policy and Resources Committee in December 2021, digital transformation was one of the key components of the Strategic Change Programme.

Since the approval of the Strategic Change Programme, digital transformation had started across the Council but as part of the new Council Plan, IT and digital transformation sought to further improve automation of processes and customer access.

Approval was requested to progress with a competitive tender to procure a partner to support the acceleration of the IT and digital transformation. This partner was referenced in this report as the 'Digital Transformation Partner'.

Members queried how this would benefit residents and were assured that core to digital transformation was better communication and engagement between residents of the council and vice versa. A discussion was had in regards to digital exclusion and retaining access to existing telephone or face to face services, as well as querying the numbers of people currently accessing services and effectively managing and overseeing the work of the Digital Transformation Partner. Members were assured that this had been considered as part of the business plan, and effective digitisation also helped free up call centre telephone lines for people who required this service. It was noted that in 2021, 25.4% of people in Wirral did not have access to fixed internet services, however that number was reduced when taking into consideration smart mobile phones.

Resolved - that

- 1. Director of Finance in consultation with the Committee Chair and Group Spokespersons be authorised to commence the competitive commission of a Digital Transformation Partner for a period of up to 3 years with the option of two one-year extensions. The expenditure will not exceed £5m for the first 3 years.**
- 2. The Director of Finance be authorised to appoint the successful bidder following the commissioning process.**
- 3. the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Finance be authorised to finalise the associated legal documentation associated with the commission.**
- 4. Following appointment of the successful bidder, the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Committee Chair and Groups Spokespersons be authorised to formulate options to oversee the work of the bidder and present a report to the Committee accordingly**
- 5. That the Director of Finance be authorised to finalise the associated legal documentation associated with the commission.**
- 6. Following appointment of the successful bidder, the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Committee Chair and Groups Spokespersons be authorised to formulate options to oversee the work of the bidder and present a report to the Committee accordingly**

74 2024/25 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE

The Director of Finance presented the report which set out progress made by the Council to deliver a balanced budget.

The Council was required to set a balanced budget each year and set a Medium-Term Financial Plan which considered the future pressures and savings options that were taken forward to result in a balanced budget position.

The report was an officer assessment of the capability of achieving balance and did not address itself to, nor pre-empt, the political decision making that must properly take its course moving forward including consideration of the Budget at Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council in February 2024.

The Council faced a challenging financial outlook due to inflationary and demand pressures alongside the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements.

The Council was developing a change programme which supported delivery of the medium-term financial plan and expected savings required to deliver a balanced budget. Members were informed that the Change Programme was aligned to the overall priorities within the Council Plan, focussing on delivering operational efficiencies and better outcomes for residents through promoting independence and improving outcomes.

Members queried whether income could be generated from recently acquired assets the Europa Centre, the Grange and the Pyramids, as well as holding costs associated with assets that are no longer in use to due to be transferred under that Community Asset Transfer process. Assurance was made that the pressure caused by the closure of the Wilkinson's site within the Europa Centre and loss of rent was being mitigated by the sale of profit-making council assets. With regard to the Grange and Pyramids sites, Members were informed that any profit from was ringfenced in a sinking fund which could be used to mitigate any pressures caused by running retail sites.

Also discussed were the costs of ensuring that Real Living Wage be paid to care workers. Assurances were made that this was being worked through by the Director of Adult Social Care and would factor in inflationary pressures. In response to a query about repayment of the Capitalisation Directive, Members were assured that repayment was assessed annually and relied on capital receipts for sale of assets were received.

Resolved – that the indicative resources, pressures and required savings as detailed in the report be noted.

75 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the work programme which provided an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year be noted.

76 **COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER - BRACKENWOOD GOLF COURSE WOODCHURCH LEISURE CENTRE**

The Director of Finance presented the report, which considered, a variation of the Heads of Terms for the transfer of Brackenwood Golf Course to Brackenwood Community Golf Limited to enable the transfer to progress and a decision on the transfer of Woodchurch Leisure Centre. Members agreed to consider the two recommendations separately.

Brackenwood

Members were informed that more work had been undertaken by Brackenwood Community Golf Limited who advised that they could only provide two-full size pitches, changing facilities and car parking, without impacting significantly on the operation of the 18-hole golf course. Provision of the 2 mini-5-a-side pitches was still possible.

Council officers concurred with this view and advised Members that space for the other two full-sized pitches could be accommodated on other sites and therefore, this will not impact on the Council's Brown Field First Strategy as set out in the Local Plan. It was therefore recommended that the Heads of Terms is varied from four full-size playing pitches to two full-sized playing pitches (11-a-side). This would enable the transfer to progress.

Resolved – that the Heads of Terms for transferring Brackenwood Golf Course to Brackenwood Community Golf Limited be varied to two full-sized playing pitches (11-a-side), rather than four full-sized pitches to enable the transfer to progress.

Woodchurch

Members advised they wished to discuss the exempt items in a closed session and moved the exemption.

It was therefore, resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

Members agreed during the exempt session, that the resolution would be published to allow members of the public to view the decision.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart it was,

Resolved (14:0, 1 abstention) – that,

- 1. Woodchurch Leisure Centre is not transferred to Woodchurch Wellbeing.**
- 2. The Director of Finance be authorised to procure the demolition of Woodchurch Leisure Centre and to accept the most economically advantageous tender provided he is satisfied that the cost can be met within the Council's budget.**

3. That the Director of Neighbourhoods be requested to,

a. undertake a comprehensive review of future opportunities for the use of the Woodchurch Leisure centre site in the context of the wider Leisure Strategy Review and

b. Make sure that the leisure review addresses the leisure needs of the Woodchurch residents including swimming.

77 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

78 COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER WOODCHURCH LEISURE CENTRE - EXEMPT APPENDICES

Resolved – That the exempt appendices be noted.

79 2024/25 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT - EXEMPT APPENDICES

Resolved – That the exempt appendices be noted.

REGULATORY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 23 November 2023

Present: Councillor A Hodson (Chair)

Councillors S Bennett R Pitt
C Cooke M Redfern
G Davies J Stewart Laing
M Jordan K Stuart
L Luxon-Kewley M Sullivan
C McDonald E Tomeny
K Murphy J McManus (In
place of B Hall)

21 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast.

22 APOLOGIES

The Chair confirmed apologies had been received from Councillor B Hall who was deputised by Councillor J McManus.

23 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in connection with any item on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

24 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that there had been no questions submitted from any members of the public or from any Members.

25 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

The Chair reported that there had been no statements or petitions received.

26 MINUTES

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023 be approved.

27 **MINUTES OF THE LICENSING PANEL**

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Panel held on 16 August, 8 September, 15 September, 21 September, 13 October and 20 October 2023 be approved.

28 **HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH SUE HIGGINSON, OBE**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report requesting that Members of the Committee recommend to Council that Sue Higginson be admitted as Honorary Freewoman of this Borough at an Extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held on 4 December 2023.

The Civic and Electoral Services Manager reported that this was a very significant step for the Council to take. Very few people had been awarded this status and it should only be awarded to someone who had made an exceptional contribution to the Borough. It is considered that Sue Higginson falls within this category.

The Civic and Electoral Services Manager advised Members of the Committee that all Political Group Leaders had been consulted and supported the proposals.

Councillor Cooke suggested whether a workshop could be arranged to discuss the Freedom of the Borough Protocol. The legal advisor to the Committee advised that this could be referred to the Governance Working Group and Councillor Cooke responded by stating he would discuss this further with Group Leaders.

On a motion by Councillor S Bennett and seconded by Councillor M Redfern, it was –

Resolved –

- (1) That in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of her dedicated service to the Borough, that Sue Higginson be admitted as an Honorary Freewoman of this Borough at an Extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held on 4 December 2023; and**
- (2) That officers be requested to take the necessary actions associated with (1) above and arrange a small civic reception for Sue Higginson and invited guests on a mutually agreeable date**

following the Extraordinary meeting of the Council on 4 December 2023.

29 **POLLING PLACES REVIEW**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report advising Members of the consultation outcome following the statutory polling place and polling district review which had been undertaken in September/October 2023 following approval to undertake a consultation by this Committee on 7 September 2023.

The Civic and Electoral Services Manager reported that the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) must conduct a statutory review of polling places and polling districts every five years which can start no earlier than 1 October 2023 and must be completed within 16 months. Therefore, this must be completed by no later than 31 January 2025.

Members were informed that the statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to undertake a full review of their Parliamentary polling places and polling districts within the Borough and make such changes as would be considered necessary to ensure they remain accessible to all electors.

Members were informed that the review formally commenced on 2 October 2023 with the publication of a formal notice at Birkenhead Town Hall and a publication on the Council's website. Notices had also been published on the Council's social media and online channels.

The Civic and Electoral Services Manager referred to the outcome of the consultation outlined within the report and advised that Electoral Services had received representations from electors and Ward Councillors and that representations had been received in the form of 39 'Have your say' responses and one email from a Ward Councillor.

The Chair, with the support of Councillor Sullivan thanked the Electoral team for their ongoing hard work.

In response to questions from Members, the Civic and Electoral Services Manager advised that the Acting Returning Officer had published notice of the review and had consulted with interested groups, including those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people, or bodies including electors, political parties, MPs and Members of the Council.

Members were further advised that of the 103 polling places, 45 schools had been used in 2019 however this had now been reduced to 34 and that the use of schools was constantly under review.

On a motion by Councillor S Bennett and seconded by Councillor J Stewart Laing, it was –

Resolved – That, in light of the consultation, it was not necessary to change any of the current polling places as a result of the review.

30 **HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LICENCES**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report seeking approval to remove the limit on the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicles that may be licensed in Wirral.

The Licensing Manager reported that on 23 January 2012 this Committee had resolved to impose a limit of 289 on the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences that could be issued by the Council and that further to a review of the limit by this Committee on 1 February 2018, it was resolved that the limit should be maintained. Members were informed that since that date there had been a significant reduction in the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicles that are licensed in Wirral from 285 at the time the limit was initially imposed to the current number which was 164. It was therefore considered that it was no longer necessary to limit the number of vehicles that may be licensed as Hackney Carriage Vehicles as it was highly unlikely that the Council would find itself in the position that it would have to refuse to grant a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence due to the limit on the number of licences that the Council would issue.

On a motion by Councillor S Bennett and seconded by Councillor J Stewart Laing, it was -

Resolved – That the limit on the number of licences that may be granted in respect of Hackney Carriage Vehicles be removed.

31 **REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report for Members of this Committee to consider whether to amend the current Hackney Carriage Fares.

The Licensing Manager reported that the current Hackney Carriage fares came into effect on 1 September 2022 and that a proposal to amend the current Hackney Carriage Fares had been received from Unite the Union on behalf of their members who are Hackney Carriage Drivers licensed by Wirral

Council. The current fares and the proposal to amend the fares were outlined in the appendices to the report.

The Licensing Manager informed Members that should the amendments to the current Hackney Carriage Fares be approved, the proposal must be advertised for a period of at least fourteen days. If no objections to the proposals are received, the revised fares could become effective in December 2023, however, should any objections be received they would be reported back to this Committee for further consideration in January 2024.

A representative of Unite the Union, Mr G Gregory addressed the Committee and informed Members that he represented 75 to 85 members of the Union. Mr Gregory advised that the proposal had been made due to an increase in the cost of running Hackney Carriage Vehicles. He also confirmed that Bank Holiday rates would be one set fare for the day and night.

A Hackney Carriage Vehicle Driver, Mr McCourt addressed the Committee who supported the proposals to amend the fares.

On a motion by Councillor J McManus and seconded by Councillor C McDonald, it was -

Resolved – That the proposal to amend the Hackney Carriage Fares be approved subject to any objections being received as part of the consultation process.

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ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 28 November 2023

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors P Gilchrist G Jenkinson
T Murphy J McManus
K Murphy M Jordan
A Onwuemene S Mountney
J Stewart Laing (In place of B Hall) C Baldwin

52 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

53 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brenda Hall.

54 MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Gail Jenkinson declared a personal interest as a client of hers was in receipt of direct payments in order to pay her.

55 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on 17 October 2023. It was noted the Councillor James Stewart Laing was present at the meeting as a substitute.

Resolved – That, subject to Councillor James Stewart Laing being noted as present, minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

56 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions, statements or petitions to report.

57 **UPDATE ON CARE MARKET SUFFICIENCY, HEALTHY WIRRAL PROGRAMME**

The Assistant Director for Integrated Services and Commissioning presented the report of the Director of Care and Health which provided an update on the Unscheduled Care Programme workstream for Care Market Sufficiency. The purpose of the workstream was to ensure sufficiency in the community care market to respond to local needs, and to remove barriers to people leaving hospital care to either go to their own home or into domiciliary care. Capacity and demand modelling had been undertaken to assess future demand and prepare for it. The numbers of people requiring packages had not increased but the complexity of the packages had since 2019. The numbers of clients awaiting packages had reduced to zero and there were also six new providers in the care market.

Members asked about the due diligence for new providers and about recruitment and retention. They also asked about the consideration of cultural diversity among carers and clients and were interested in seeing figures on this at future meetings.

Resolved: That

- 1. the improvements to the care market capacity and flow for domiciliary care be noted.**
- 2. the work completed with care homes to improve safe transfers of care from a hospital setting be noted.**
- 3. the future work of the Care Market Sufficiency Group be endorsed.**

58 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH 2023/24 Q2 BUDGET MONITORING**

The Director of Care and Health introduced his report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee as at Quarter 2 (1 Apr – 30 Sep) 2023/24. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance for this area of activity, including delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to officers on the performance of those budgets. At the end of Quarter 2, there was a reported adverse position of £0.435m on the Committees net revenue budget of £130.579m. Underlying pressures and extra funding were detailed.

Members queried aspects of the report including extra care housing developments. It was noted that some applications for development had been rejected at Planning Committee and a workshop with Planning officers was suggested to examine the issue. The use of technology to assist with care was also discussed.

Resolved: That

- 1. the adverse position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- 2. the delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- 3. the reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments be noted.**
- 4. the level of reserves at Quarter 2 be noted.**

59 ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Assistant Director Operational Delivery and Professional Standards presented the report of the Director of Care and Health which was a performance report in relation to Adult Social Care and Public Health. It was noted that the increase in care home clients was less than proportional to the increase in population which was a sign of positive interventions of the Home First initiative. There were measures in place to improve the quality of care homes and to enable reablement of clients so they do not suffer a detriment to their lifestyle as a result of treatment.

Members questioned the distribution and improvement progress of care homes.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

60 ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members considered the work programme for the Committee.

Various changes were suggested including:

- the addition of a workshop with planning officers on supported living projects (i.e. Extra Care Housing) to work through the approach of such developments to the planning process;
- The moving of the National Substance Misuse Grant Funding Update to March 2024 when there would be more substantial issues to report;
- The All Age Disability And Mental Health Service Delivery Review be considered before the contract expires in September 2024;
- Front Door To Volunteering item in March 2024 looking at the initiative being led by Wirral Community and Voluntary Services including funding and social prescribing
- An update on the Domestic Abuse Strategy as it relates to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Resolved: That, subject to the changes noted above, the proposed Adult Social Care and Public Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be noted.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 29 November 2023

Present: Councillor S Powell-Wilde (Chair)

Councillors P Basnett V Wilson
S Bennett C Cooke
T Laing J Grier
L Luxon-Kewley C Carubia
K Hodson M Jordan (for C
Povall)

53 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast and reminded them that a copy of the webcast would be retained on the Council's website for two years.

54 APOLOGIES

Cllr Cherry Povall sent her apologies, Cllr Mary Jordan substituted.

55 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interests in connections with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Paula Basnett and the Chair both declared personal interest as foster carers.

56 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

57 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The Chair noted that no public questions, statements, or petitions had been received.

58 **CONSULTATION ON AGE RANGE CHANGE, HESWALL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Assistant Director for Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education. The report provided the outcome of a consultation on a proposal to alter the age range of Heswall Primary School to establish a maintained nursery class and a 2-year-old provision. No objections were received during the consultation. The proposal will mean that Heswall primary school will have formalised its oversight of the early years provision at the school.

The report noted that incorporating early years provision into the maintained school would allow children in attendance to be registered as pupils of the school. This would enable the school to ensure communication and administration and adopt a cohesive and consistent approach to learning through to Year 6. This change would not increase the number of early years places in the area or impact on the school's admission policy for Foundation 2.

Members discussed staffing and budget implications, and were assured by officers that there were no staffing implications and that officers had been assured by the school that it has the budget to cover the changes.

Resolved -

- 1. That the alteration of the age range of Heswall Primary School from 4 to 11 years old, to 2 to 11 years old, as a prescribed alteration to a maintained school be approved.**
- 2. That all necessary authority be granted to the Director of Children, Families and Education to implement the proposal.**

59 **CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY**

The Director for Children, Families and Education presented her report which noted that the Sufficiency Duty required Local Authorities and children's safeguarding partners to ensure sufficient local accommodation and support to meet the needs of children and young people in care, or to ensure that there was a plan in place to move towards that position. It presented an overview of children in care, how long they had been in care and some of the reasons why children needed to become looked after. The report detailed the current level of provision for children who are looked after which included foster placements, residential homes and semi supported accommodation.

Members discussed the need for more foster carers, why the largest cohort of children taken into care was in the 10-15 year old range, the differences in those receiving help between the East and West of the borough, and the number of looked after children awaiting adoption.

Officers noted that the number of foster carers was falling nationally and that while Wirral is in a similar position it had been more successful than others. Officer reassured Members that work was ongoing to improve the support offered to foster carers and to encourage more people to become a foster carer. Officers noted that reasons for the 10-15 cohort being the largest were varied and abuse and neglect were the most common reasons. Children of that age are more likely to be out in the community than younger children and are more likely to fall foul of criminal exploitation. Officers suggested bringing a further report to committee on the impact that Early Years work might have in reducing the number of children in the 10-15 cohort becoming looked after. Officers noted that a common difference between the East and West of the borough was that while the issues and needs were similar across the borough, people were less likely to seek help in some areas and that work was being done to make help as accessible as possible to those that might not know how best to seek it. Officers confirmed that the 17 children awaiting adoption were in the process of receiving a placement order.

Resolved – That

1. The Childrens Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2023-2026 be noted; and

2. An update on the progress of the Strategy to be delivered within 12 months be agreed.

60 2023-24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director for Children, Families and Education. The report set out the financial monitoring information for the Children, Families and Education Committee as at Quarter 2 (1 Apr – 30 Sep) of 2023-24. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023-24 saving programme and a summary of reserves to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 2, there was a forecast adverse position of £0.351m on the Committees net revenue budget of £86,748m. This position was based on activity to date, projected trends in income and expenditure and potential mitigation to offset areas of adverse/favourable variance.

Members discussed the adverse forecast and whether the directorate was likely to get a handle on the deficit, as well as the impact that the number of asylum seeking children requiring residential care might have on the budget.

Officers noted that they had seen a national rise in special needs with associated costs in that area, as well as a rise in the number of EHCP assessments. They proposed a further workshop to go over these trends in

detail and noted that it would be a challenge to balance the budget. Officers stated that the government provided a fixed amount of money to the council for each asylum seeking child requiring residential care but that if that child needed further care, the cost would fall to the council.

Resolved – That

- 1. The forecast revenue position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- 2. The progress on delivery of the 2023-24 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- 3. The forecast level of reserves at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- 4. The forecast capital position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**

61 **A CELEBRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Interim Head of Performance and Improvement introduced the report of the Director for Children, Families and Education. The report provided the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of how Council services were actively engaging with children and young people to ensure their views, experiences and contribution were influencing delivery and helping to improve outcomes. The report also celebrated some of the many successes Wirral's young people had achieved in the previous twelve months.

Members thanked officers for the report and noted how impressed they had been when attending events involving young people from Wirral.

Resolved – That the important contribution made to service delivery and Wirral communities by children and young people be noted and those involved be congratulated for those contributions.

62 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which reminded members that the Children, Young People and Housing Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were the remit of the Committee.

Officers noted that an additional report on Early Years was to be added to the work programme with the intention to bring it to the committee in either January or March. The Chair noted her preference would be for it to be received at January's committee.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 30 November 2023

Present:

Councillor H Cameron (Chair)

Councillors	P Martin	G Bennett
	P Jobson	J Johnson
	T Laing	C McDonald
	G McManus	R Molyneux
	K Stuart	M Redfern

45 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

46 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence

47 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Tom Laing declared an interest in item 8 due to his connection to the Co-operative.

48 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

49 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

50 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Cathy Roberts asked a question regarding if the Council would work with New Brighton Coastal Community Team (NBCCT) on a policy for leisure events in New Brighton.

The Chair responded by thanking the NBCCT for its feedback in relation to evaluation of events. The Chair explained further that the Council did not have the resources to routinely evaluate events delivered by other organisations, unless the Council had been directly commissioned for the event. However, the Council did have a clear and well-established process for considering the impact of planned events through its multi-agency Event Safety Advisory Group. Officers would welcome any evidence indicating any associated loss of income to resulting from the events mentioned in the question from NBCCT so that this evidence can be considered by the Event Safety Advisory Group. Any policies must be borough wide in their approach. At the current time, the Council does not have the capacity or resources to undertake this piece of work and the Committee is satisfied that the process for assessing planned events through the Event Safety Advisory Group provides a robust mechanism for ensuring that any impact on localities is understood and mitigation put in place where necessary. The Committee asks the NBCCT to note that there are a number of strands of work with which the group has been proactively engaged to secure positive outcomes for New Brighton from a visitor perspective. This activity will be fully evaluated in due course to understand the impact on visitor numbers.

Cathy Roberts asked a supplementary question. The Coastal Community Team was set up through government initiative to develop strategy in partnership with the Council to promote New Brighton. No members of the Council are part of the team.

The Chair responded that a more detail response would be given in writing but advised that the Ward Councillor would assist the group with their involvement in the Liverpool City Region.

50.1 **Statements and Petitions**

51 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

52 **LIVERPOOL AND WIRRAL CORONER AREA ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

The Coroner presented his report. The Coroner was an independent judicial office holder, appointed by the local authority. They investigated deaths reported to them if it appeared that: the death was violent or unnatural; the cause of death was unknown; or the person died in prison, police custody or another type of state detention. The report was the full annual report of the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area for the period of 2022.

Members noted that preventative work was needed in order to advise the community of the importance of seatbelts, and that the issue could be brought to the committees responsible for transport and environment if necessary.

Members noted the workload of the coroner and the waiting times for inquests and commended the work that had been done as a national example.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

53 **THIRD SECTOR COMMISSIONING AND COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND FAITH SECTOR (CVF) SUMMARY UPDATE REPORT**

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report to Members. The report had been produced in accordance with the agreed work programme, following a request from the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee for a six-month update of spend and activity on the Community, Voluntary and Faith (CVF) Sector and 3rd Sector commissioning.

Following a member query about the process of Community Asset Transfer (CAT), it was explained to members that CAT is a long process with a dedicated officer for transfers who has access to legal support to assure the correct rights are in place. Members were informed that a report on CATs would be included on the Work Programme of the Committee.

Members also enquired if more could be done in regards to communication and grouping of charity organisations. Officers confirmed this would be beneficial to both the Council and the groups and would assure all groups are receiving the same communication from the Council.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

54 **TCCL QUARTER 2 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING BUDGET REPORT**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report to Members. The report set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 2 (30

September) of 2023/24. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a

summary of reserves and balances, to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provided robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 2, there was a forecast adverse position of £3.196m on Committee spend which could be largely offset by utilising the corporate contingency budget and expected savings from reduced energy costs. This position was based on activity to date, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

Following a Member query, Members were informed that the budget to replace vandalised property sits with maintenance, and depending on the asset that had been vandalised would sit with the relevant place committee.

Resolved – That the Committee noted,

- 1. the Directorate forecasted an adverse position of £3.196m presented at Quarter 2.**
 - 2. the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 2.**
 - 3. the forecasted level of reserves and balances at Quarter 2.**
- the forecasted capital position presented at Quarter 2.**

55 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Lead Consultant Lawyer presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Members brought to the attention of officers a number of topics to be added to the work programme;

- A workshop on Community Asset Transfers.
- A workshop on retail crime.

Resolved – that, subject to the addition of the items noted at the meeting, the work programme be noted.

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 December 2023

Present:

Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors	S Foulkes	M Booth
	A Ainsworth	G Davies
	G Jenkinson	N Graham
	P Jobson	J Walsh
	V Wilson	A Brame

50 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

51 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

52 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. There were no declarations of interests.

53 **MINUTES**

It was noted that Councillor Ed Lamb had requested an update on the infrastructure plan in regards to the Active Travel Strategy. The Chair also asked requested that officers be thanked in regards to the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy and that it had been incorrectly noted that Councillor Gail Jenkinson had presented a petition.

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2023 be approved as a correct record with the above amendments.

54 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Janine Pinion asked a question regarding a marked increase in car stereo noise in her residential area, asking if the chair could provide an update on

the progress of the programme and did she agree that the work needs to begin urgently.

The chair responded to say that council only has statutory powers for stationary vehicles or a vehicle on private land. Noise from a moving vehicle is a matter for the police. The chair also noted that the World Health Organisation recognised traffic noise as a health risk.

Janine Pinion then asked a further supplementary question which the chair confirmed would be answered in 10 working days.

Michael Thomas asked a question regarding the netting along Hoylake prom. He noted that, to date by, 15th November 2023 the netting has not stopped any sand from reaching the prom. He asked if most of the whistling, plastic, ineffective, view blocking, netting leaving could be removed, leaving just a section between Trinity Road and the lifeboat station where there is less vegetation currently trapping the wind-blown sand.

The chair responded to say that the Committee had identified two beach management options for development at the meeting on 30th November 2022. In developing those options, the efficiency of the green netting is considered and recommendations made for an appropriate way forward for each management option.

Ken Ferguson asked if the activities of the Anti20 Coalition over the last eight weeks in mounting 'yellow board' campaigns throughout Wirral had convinced councillors of the depth of feeling of those taking part. He noted that the Prime Minister had that moves to implement 20 mph zones and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods should cease. In the light of this, why was this committee not prepared to pause the implementation of the 20 MPH policy in Wirral.

The Chair noted that Committee was considering a report on its agenda this evening to consider objections and comments of support submitted during the statutory traffic regulation order consultation period for Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme. Two options were put forward within the report for Committee to consider, which will be debated fully during consideration of that item. The report to the Committee references current guidance on 20mph limits. The chair noted that the 20mph zones were a road safety implementation.

Ed Lamb queried the issue of pavement parking, asking if highways officers could be instructed to begin work on a Wirral-wide plan to address the problem of pavement parking, and asked if this could be added to the work programme.

The Chair noted that, the government consulted on pavement parking powers enforcement over three years ago, but there had been no enforcement

legislation put forward to date. Officers could consider enforcement at problem locations using Traffic Regulation orders, however this would be resource heavy and time consuming. The chair suggested that if the parking strategy be agreed then she would add pavement parking enforcement to the work programme.

Catherine Evans asked a question regarding a report on report from the Together Association, 'Clean' Air, Dirty Money, Filthy Politics' which shows how big money from a handful of billionaires is driving anti-car and associated Net Zero policies in the UK. Catherine noted that the public must have transparency into funding and influence on Net Zero policies, and a proper cost-benefit analysis of Net Zero. She asked if this Committee pause the 20mph rollout to fully investigate the impact of big money on local policy making and produce a full cost – benefit analysis of 20mph?

The Chair responded to say that, in response to a previous question, the Committee was considering a report on its agenda this evening to consider objections and comments of support submitted during the statutory traffic regulation order consultation period for Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme. Two options were put forward within the report for Members of the Committee to consider, which were to be debated fully during consideration of that item.

Catherine Evans then asked a further supplementary question which the chair confirmed would be answered in 10 working days.

Julien Priest asked a question noting that at the last meeting of this committee he had asked a question regarding the prospect for additional zebra crossings to make it safer for pedestrians crossing roads, in particular Birkenhead Road in Meols and Hoylake. Julien note that the response to his previous question made it pretty clear that budget constraints and the local safety scheme review meant it is highly unlikely that any additional pedestrian crossings will be implemented any time soon. He asked if officers had determined that it is acceptable, considering pedestrian safety, that Birkenhead Road should remain as a 30MPH limit within a wider 20MPH zone from its outer periphery all the way to its junction with Newton Road?

The chair responded to say that Birkenhead Road is a wide “A” class main distributor road with very little on street parking and good forward visibility. The chair also listed the various reasons why Birkenhead Road has not been put forward as a 20mph zone.

Julien Priest then asked a further supplementary question which the chair confirmed would be answered in 10 working days.

The Head of Legal services road out a question of behalf of Keith Randles queried information obtained via the Freedom of information act 2000, within

an email Dated 2 February 2021 from the RNLI Head office to Wirral Borough Council in regards to operational difficulties being currently endured at the Hoylake RNLI site. He asked why the Council were putting those RNLI volunteers and the members of the public on whom they are sent to rescue at a greater unnecessary risk.

The Chair responded to say that Council officers had been working closely with the RNLI at local, regional and national level to understand, in detail, their operational requirements so that they can be considered within the two beach management options identified for further development by this Committee in November 2022.

55 **2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER 2**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 2 (30 September) of 2023/24.

The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 2, there was a forecast adverse position of £1.938m on Committee spend which could be largely offset by utilising the corporate contingency budget and expected savings from reduced energy costs.

Members queried the capital programme underspend in energy efficiency building work and Leasow to Seacombe Corridor (as listed in appendix 2). Officers advised they would get this information for Members, but were informed that in regards to energy efficiency, Members had agreed to release 41 assets and it would not be viable to invest in buildings that are earmarked for disposal, but improvements had been made in leisure services, specifically investing in pool covers.

Also discussed was capital spending and queried if the £3.2m allocated for waste in Quarter 2 was due to the statutory requirement for food waste disposal. It was noted as a provisional allocation, however may not be required due to possible burdens funding from central government and would likely slip to 2025/26 as it will not be required this financial year.

Resolved – That

- (1) the Directorate forecast adverse position of £1.938m presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**

- (2) the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted.
- (3) the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 2 be noted.
- (4) the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.

56 **WIRRAL'S AIR QUALITY STRATEGY 2024-2028**

The Environmental Health Officer introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which detailed the Wirral Air Quality Strategy 2024-2028. The report covered all wards and outlined the work that the council would undertake to support the government's long-term air quality goals, including a steep percentage reduction to population exposure to particulate matter (PM2.5).

Members were informed that the risk of moving forward without implementing an Air Quality Strategy, would have meant that the council is not fulfilling the statutory requirement of the Environment Act 1995 as amended by the Environment Act 2021 by publishing an Air Quality Strategy setting out air quality standards, objectives, and measures for improving ambient air quality. This would have had both reputational and service delivery consequences and would have resulted in criticism of the council by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Members discussed the areas around Woodchurch School playing fields, querying the placement of roadside air quality and particulate matter. Also discussed was allotment burning and the guidance distributed on this, domestic log burning, car idling and queried if the Council should be working towards World Health Organisation targets for air quality.

Resolved – That the Wirral Air Quality Strategy 2024-2028 be approved.

57 **20MPH ZONES PHASE 2 - CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS AND OFFICERS RESPONSES**

The Assistant Director of Highways and Infrastructure introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which considered objections and comments of support submitted during the statutory traffic regulation order consultation period for Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme which consisted of 15 proposed areas. In view of the number of objections received to Phase 2 following the implementation of Phase 1 the Committee may wish to consider alternatives to proceeding directly with Phase 2, so two possible options were recommended for consideration.

Members noted that 20mph zones had been debated at the previous nights Council Meeting. A further discussion was held around the various local

campaigns on the topic and clarification was sought over road signs and enforcement. Members also raised concerns regarding the low consultation turnout and the outcome of surveys undertaken by Members in their wards. The focus on road safety was reiterated, noting that Wirral has traditionally underperformed in road safety initiatives.

Councillor Max Booth then moved the below amendment to option 2 of the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services be instructed to review and re-evaluate the proposed roads within Phase 2 in light of the consultation response. Considering a more targeted approach, for example, restricted to locations near schools and where collision records are highest and to bring back a further report to the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee detailing these proposals.

The amendment was put and lost (3:8)

Councillor Liz Grey then moved option 1 of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Alan Brame.

It was therefore resolved (8:3) that - the Director of Neighbourhood Services be instructed to introduce all of Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme on those roads or parts of roads shown on the list attached within Appendix A to this report.

58 WIRRAL PARKING STRATEGY

The Lead Commissioner for strategic transport and technology introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which sought approval for the adoption of a parking strategy proposed to cover public on and off-street parking in Wirral.

Members were reminded that on 19 June 2023 a report was presented to committee detailing work which had been undertaken to support the development of the parking strategy, including surveys and modelling forecasts, reviews of research and best practice from other authorities. The report also provided details of Phase 1 public and stakeholder consultation.

This earlier work, along with the feedback from a second Phase of public and stakeholder consultation, undertaken between 7 August to 25 September 2023, had been used to produce a parking strategy with the aim that it will support the safe and efficient management of traffic, help the local economy and businesses, and contribute to addressing the Environment and Climate Emergency. The parking strategy was intended to provide a clear framework

to manage on and off-street parking in Wirral within a wider context of sustainable economic growth and urban regeneration.

Members noted concerns about car parking charges for employees who may be on low wages, or who work in essential services. Whilst discussing the Parking Strategies to residents, Members queried how they should explain car parking charges. Officers explained that car parking services came with maintenance costs that needed to be covered. Also considered was the concept that paid for parking often means that shopping trips are consolidated, with more money being spent in retail. Free parking can also mean that people park to commute, with no money being spent locally.

Members also queried parking levies, and the Parking Code of Practice Act 2019, discussing the limitations and potential of levies as a way to reinvest in local transportation schemes. Members also asked for clarification on car parking written into Community Asset Transfers, notably Heswall Hall and were assured that these there were no car parks specified in the strategy, but that officers had been notified of limitations written into the lease. For the avoidance of doubt, it was confirmed that future policies deriving from the strategy would be bought back to committee for further decisions.

Resolved – That the parking strategy as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

59 **EXPERIMENTAL MOTORCARAVAN PARKING RESTRICTION SCHEME**

The Senior Network Operations Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which considered direct feedback from local ward Members, a petition signed by 11 people, 36 objections and 9 representations of support submitted during the statutory 6- month consultation period for the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) relating to Motorcaravan Parking, that was introduced on Coastal Drive and Kings Parade in July 2022. A plan detailing the measures introduced was attached in Appendix A to the report.

Members queried a strategy for off-road commercial caravan parks in Wirral, noting that this had previously been considered by Members as part of a working group of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in 2021. However, Members were informed that the Neighbourhoods directorate had lost the commercial team who were looking at this and the project had now been subsumed by the New Brighton Neighbourhood Framework which is due for further consideration.

On a motion by Councillor Liz Grey, seconded by Councillor Gail Jenkinson it was,

Resolved – That

- (1) the consultation feedback received on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order relating to Motorcaravan Parking, that was introduced on Coastal Drive and Kings Parade, New Brighton in July 2022. and the officer's responses as set out in Appendix B be noted; and**
- (2) the introduction of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order be approved relating to**
 - (a) the prohibition of overnight Motorcaravan parking for Coastal Drive and Kings Parade, New Brighton in accordance with the process set out in paragraph 5.4 of this report; and**
 - (b) a prohibition on overnight parking by Motorcaravans on all sections of unrestricted carriageway on North Parade and Meols Parade to deal with Motorcaravan parking displacement in accordance with the process set out in paragraph 8.3 of this report.**
- (3) Officers are requested to provide this committee with a future report on the Traffic Regulation Orders, reviewing their effectiveness in line with the new Wirral parking strategy, and analysing environmental, road safety, financial, financial concerns and facilities.**

60 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal Services presented the report and advised Members that the Committee in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Members requested that an update to the Air Quality Strategy be added to the work programme for September 2024, and also asked that an outline network infrastructure plan for the active travel strategy also be added.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted with the above additions.

ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6 December 2023

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors GJ Davies J Bird
M Skillicorn E Lamb
A Hodson E Tomeny
A Gardner H Raymond
B Kenny (for R Pitt) A Davies (for G Wood)

42 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website for two years.

43 APOLOGIES

Councillor Gill Wood sent her apologies. Councillor Angela Davies substituted.

Councillor Ritchie Pitt sent his apologies. Councillor Brian Kenny substituted.

44 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any items on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

45 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

46 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr Alan Featherstone asked for the square metreage rented by all tenants at the present Birkenhead Market, including the outside market.

The Chair responded that currently, a total of 5,500 metres squared was rented by all tenants of Birkenhead Market. This was split into 4,656 metres squared in the indoor market and 644 metres squared in the outside market.

Mr Featherstone asked a supplementary question, about whether a feasibility report that showed a reduction of 50% of the square metreage for traders had been made available to councillors.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Mr Featherstone asked whether a current feasibility study document had been shared with Members of the Committee and whether that document would be made available to the market community when consultations begin.

The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that the document would be shared with members of the committee.

Mr Featherstone asked a supplementary question asking for clarification that the feasibility study raised in his previous question was the most recent version and not one from 3 years prior.

The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that it would be the most recent version of the study.

Mr Terry O'Reilly noted that market traders had been promised a state-of-the-art new market in the heart of Birkenhead town centre and asked for an explanation of how moving to a re-purposed site on the outskirts of the town centre would deliver on the promises made to the community.

The Chair responded that there were examples of other markets that have transitioned into re-purposed sites such as Altrincham and Crewe. He noted that high-level proposals to date had suggested circa £6 million of investment in the former Argos site would be required to deliver a market of similar internal quality to the House of Fraser option. He noted that the Argos option was located within walking distance of the train station, bus station, a multi-storey car park and sites allocated for housing within the local plan.

Mr Greg McTigue asked whether the committee felt it was acceptable that traders should be told about the Council's redevelopment plans 24 hours before the committee were due to make a decision on the future of the market.

The Chair responded that the agenda for the committee, including the report on the options of the market, had been published on 28 November 2023, in line with standard operating procedures. He noted that following the

publication of the report, officers and Members had met with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association.

Mr Dave Borrill was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked whether a comprehensive retail assessment had been undertaken to evaluate the effects of moving the market into the Argos site and the impacts it would have on small businesses, businesses surrounding the market and the wider community.

The Chair responded that the work to date on the Argos site proposal was on the basis of a concept design to help understand whether the site could accommodate a similar number of units to the House of Fraser option. He noted that subject to committee approval, additional work would be developed that would reflect the wider town centre regeneration proposition.

Mr Joe Orr asked the Chair to outline how the preferred option to move the Birkenhead Market into the former Argos site would meet the expectations of customers, the community and businesses considering the market's historical significance?

The Chair noted that the Council acquired the Grange and the Pyramids shopping centre in May 2023. He stated that the work developed to date that was outlined in the committee report was a concept and subject to committee approvals. The Council was committed to building relationships with traders and the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association to ensure more enhanced engagement.

Mr Orr asked a supplementary question, querying whether the council had conducted any surveys to gauge public opinion of the local community regarding the potential move of Birkenhead Market.

The Chair stated that Mr Orr would receive a written response within 10 working days.

Mr Mike Eccles asked whether Birkenhead's key stakeholders and public opinions / concerns had been actively sought and considered before deciding on the change from a bespoke modern new market building to a repurposed, end-of-line centre unit?

The Chair responded that the Council had met with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association in November 2023 and the traders had made it clear that the House of Fraser option was not their preferred choice. Subject to determination of the Committee, the Council would continue work to engage with traders.

Cat Lavender was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read her question on her behalf. She asked if analysis had been undertaken on the

economic impact due to potential job losses and business closures on the Argos market proposal?

The Chair responded that this was a speculative question that he was not in a position to answer, however as part of future engagement the Council would of course work to understand trader requirements.

Mr Tommy Roberts was present, but at his request, the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question for him. He asked how the Council would support displaced traders and businesses impacted by the changes that would come from moving Birkenhead Market into the former Argos site?

Mr Roberts had a supplemental question which asked what would happen to the rest of the funding if the original grant was for £15 million and the refurbishment of the former Argos site would cost £6 million.

The Chair stated that Mr Roberts would receive a written response within 10 working days.

The Chair stated that all proposals put forward by officers for consideration by the Committee would be subject to engagement with traders.

Sarah O'Reilly was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read her question on her behalf. She noted that having surveyed 75% of traders, 95% of those respondents stated that they rejected the proposed move to the Argos site. She also noted that the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association had undertaken a petition with over 1400 signatures and asked if the Council would engage with traders and the public in a meaningful way before any decision was made?

The Chair noted that the Council had already met with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association as an outcome of their recent election and had also met them and other market traders in advance of the meeting of committee. He stated that the Council would continue to undertake meaningful engagement.

Mr Sean Martin asked whether the Chair would agree to postpone the approval process pending the release of the New Brighton Neighbourhood Framework and a full review of the New Brighton Masterplan?

The Chair noted that a consultation on the draft Marine Promenade Masterplan closed on 4 December 2023. Responses were currently being reviewed and would be taken into consideration when finalising the Masterplan. A report of consultation would be presented to Committee alongside the final Masterplan, to ensure that the views of all respondents to the consultation had been taken into account and considered in an open, transparent and timely manner. The publication of a Marine Promenade Masterplan was a requirement of the Local Plan. The aim of the Masterplan

was to ensure that development proposals come forward in a co-ordinated and planned way, while providing flexibility by setting out a number of potential design options for each site.

The New Brighton Neighbourhood Framework was a regeneration led document that was still being finalised. The document would cover the wider regeneration area and would also be subject to consultation. The document had already undergone 2 rounds of informal consultation and this had helped inform the Masterplan process.

Mr Martin asked a supplemental question stating that New Brighton had been let down by the Master Plan and he asked when the council would put it right.

The Chair state that Mr Martin would receive a written response with 10 working days.

47 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

Mr Alan Featherstone presented a statement in respect of agenda item 6, Birkenhead Market Options Study. The statement noted that he had attended the meeting of Council on Monday 4 December 2023 where there were some promising commitments to local businesses through the Local Plan. He was disappointed by the way that market traders were shown around the proposed Argos site, feeling that there was too much secrecy and felt that the site was too small, with a report delivered in May 2023 that showed this. He noted that Britain had a reputation as a nation of shopkeepers and asked Members of the Committee to consider voting against the recommendations in the report if they had any doubts about whether the proposed site could accommodate enough traders.

Mr Greg McTigue presented a statement on behalf of the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association. He stated that he was witnessing the demise of the traditional market in Birkenhead through under- investment, mis-management and complacency. He noted that the number of market traders had reduced significantly in recent years. He noted his disappointment in the proposed former Argos site compared to the bespoke, flagship design the market traders had been promised and stated that its location was also poor in comparison.

48 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

The Chair noted that no such questions had been submitted.

49 **BIRKENHEAD MARKET OPTIONS STUDY**

The Chair noted that an addition to the recommendations in the report had been circulated to Members of the Committee from the Director of Regeneration and Place. The additional recommendation read as follows:

“The Director of Regeneration and Place wishes to make a further recommendation as follows to the above report as a new paragraph 7. Paragraph 7 of the recommendations within the report will be numbered as Recommendation 8:

Other Options

7. Agree that in recognition of recent engagement with Birkenhead Market Traders Association the Director of Regeneration and Place be requested to undertake further feasibility work on both:

a) St John's Pavement to determine whether this is a viable option for market traders; and

b) the refurbishment of part of the existing Birkenhead Market.”

The Assistant Director for Asset Management and Investment presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report noted that the current Birkenhead Market Hall was an aging building, operating inefficiently and the Council had been considering options to re-locate the market to an alternative market site for several years. A number of options had been considered and rejected for a variety of reasons detailed in the report, leaving the proposal to relocate the existing market to a new purpose-built market hall on the site of the former House of Fraser Store, as the current option subject to the scheme being delivered to an acceptable design and cost.

The capital cost of delivery for the House of Fraser proposal was at £31.6 million and the emerging funding gap could have had a significant impact on the Councils financial position.

The report noted that the Council acquired the Grange and the Pyramids in May 2023 and as part of the acquisition a strategic review of the vacant sites and sites that could accommodate a market offer to a similar size of the House of Fraser proposal had been undertaken. The report proposed to examine in detail an alternative permanent option in the former Argos Store located in the Grange shopping centre. However, the Council was at an early stage of engagement with new representatives for the market traders and consideration of alternative options was appropriate.

A discussion was had on the rise in costs of the House of Fraser site and the perceived slippage of the offer to traders, the need for further information on the costs involved and the housing requirements involved from grant funding received from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Members requested more communication from officers on plans and noted that the original plans for the House of Fraser site were meant to be a lynchpin for the regeneration of the area. Concerns were raised as to whether the proposed move to the former Argos site would have the same impact. Members were informed that the number of stalls available at the Argos site was comparable to the House of Fraser site.

Members were informed that Councillor Helen Raymond wished to move an amendment which had been circulated to Members of the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at **19:05**

The meeting reconvened at **19:15**

A discussion was had on the need for a high-quality market, Members requested information on the number of stalls available for each option, with artist impressions of the sites. They felt that traders should be consulted more. The need for good communication was raised.

A motion was then formally put by Councillor Helen Raymond, Seconded by Councillor Ewan Tomeny:

‘At recommendation 2, Add “current” before “market proposals on the House of Fraser site be paused”.

Add 2b:

Furthermore, the Director of Regeneration and Place is requested to prepare a sufficiently detailed report for members to consider for a new new-build proposal on the House of Fraser site, which takes into account of the original aims outlined in the St Werburgh’s Quarter master plan – including a grant funded residential scheme – within the available Council-controlled budget plus any accessible commercial/third party funding.’

The motion was then put and lost (4:7)

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Andrew Hodson to include the additional recommendation from the Director of Regeneration and Place, it was,

Resolved – That

House of Fraser Site

1.
 - a. **The work to date to progress the House of Fraser site as the currently agreed location to accommodate the Birkenhead Market (as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report) be noted.**
 - b. **The inability for the House of Fraser site to provide the previously identified brownfield housing requirement of 89 units as referred to in paragraph 3.11 of this report be noted;**
 - c. **The increased financial envelope required to construct the Birkenhead market on the House of Fraser Site as currently designed, set out in paragraph 3.10 of this report be noted.**
2. **Further work on the developing the market proposals on the House of Fraser site be paused at this time whilst the Argos option is considered, noting the 6-month time constraint for a decision on proceeding beyond**

RIBA Stage 3 for the House of Fraser site as set out in paragraph 5.3 of this report at this time be agreed.

3. The further work that will be undertaken on the potential future use of the House of Fraser Site, for consideration by this Committee in due course in the event that a future decision not to proceed with the development of a market on the House of Fraser site is made be noted.

Argos Site

4. The limited work undertaken to date on development of the Argos site option to house a permanent market for Birkenhead as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.
5. The Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to proceed with procurement of the RIBA stage 3 design development and appointment of a market consultant to further develop the market option.
6. The Director of Regeneration and Place will bring forward the outcome of the market feasibility and output of the market consultancy work on the Argos option to a meeting of this Committee in Spring 2024 which will include a full options appraisal on the Argos site and associated financial implications be noted.

Other Options

7. In recognition of recent engagement with Birkenhead Market Traders Association it be agreed that the Director of Regeneration and Place be requested to undertake further feasibility work on both:
 - a. St John's Pavement to determine whether this is a viable option for market traders; and
 - b. the refurbishment of part of the existing Birkenhead Market

Wirral Growth Company LLP

8. Subject to future member decisions on the developer for the market and the advanced state of work on Pasture Road as set out in paragraph 3.24 of the report, it be noted that consideration will need to be given to the future of Wirral Growth Company LLP and a report shall be brought to a future meeting of this Committee accordingly

50 CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT SELECTIVE LICENSING FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

The Principal Strategic Housing and Investment Officer presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report set out the reasons for implementing a Selective Licencing scheme (scheme 4) in four designated areas

in the borough. There was a robust evidence base to justify the targeting of proposed areas and support for the scheme had been evidenced through feedback from a wide-ranging consultation exercise. The consultation survey showed that 84.9% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with selective licensing proposals compared to 10.3% who either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

The report noted that while there had been substantial improvements in property conditions, previous and current Selective Licensing schemes demonstrated that without pro-active Council intervention in these areas, vulnerable tenants would continue to live in poor quality, often hazardous housing.

Members discussed the benefits of the selective licensing scheme, the impact that some rogue landlords can have on the lives of their tenants and the costs of the scheme. Members also asked whether the service had the resources to deliver the scheme, which officers confirmed that they were confident that they did. Officers were congratulated for the level of consultation for the scheme and were thanked officers for the report.

Resolved – That it be agreed that:

- 1. Selective Licensing shall apply in Birkenhead West (LSOA E01007127 / Wirral 016B), Seacombe St Pauls (LSOA E01007273 / Wirral 008B), Bidston & St James West (LSOA E01007123 / Wirral 011D) and Egremont North (LSOA E01007218 / Wirral 002A);**
- 2. The Selective Licensing designation for the above four areas shall commence on 1st April 2024 and last until 31st March 2029;**
- 3. The selective licence fee shall be at the rate of £585; and**
- 4. Any future eligible recharges be reserved for consideration as part of the review of the next Selective Licensing Scheme which will be brought to this Committee in 2024.**

51 **2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO**

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented his report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee as at Quarter 2 (30 September) of 2023/24. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

Resolved – That Committee noted:

- 1. The adverse revenue forecast of £1.3m as at Quarter 2;**

2. **The progress on delivery of the 2023-24 savings programme at Quarter 2;**
3. **The level of reserves at Quarter 2; and**
4. **The capital programme of £52.238m for 2023-24**

52 **NEIGHBOURHOOD FRAMEWORK & MASTERPLANS APPROVAL PROCESS**

The Head of Regeneration Delivery presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. He noted that the date given in paragraph 3.9 was an error and that the follow-up reports were due to be presented to the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee on 4 March 2024. The report sought to set out the status of existing Neighbourhood Frameworks and Masterplans and the process and timescale for adopting those that had been recently published and subject to consultation.

The report noted that the Council had been developing its regeneration strategy for Wirral Left Bank for a number of years. The Birkenhead 2040 Framework has been endorsed by the Committee as the interim regeneration strategy for Wirral in March 2022. This document was supported by a series of more detailed Neighbourhood Frameworks setting out the regeneration objectives and strategies for specific areas. Some of these regeneration documents were completed and published in 2021. Other Neighbourhood Frameworks remained in draft as further work was carried out on delivery strategies.

Members discussed the value of being able to see all the masterplans in the borough. A member queried whether specific areas such as West Kirby needed a masterplan when they are not as in need of regeneration in the way that other areas are. Members also queried the need for employing consultants to devise questions for residents.

The Director for Regeneration and Place noted that he agreed with the Members' comments and that the scope of consultation for areas such as West Kirby should be done in consultation with local ward councillors. He felt that local officers could come up with plans for the area rather than use outside consultants.

The Head of Regeneration and Delivery stated that the work outlined in the report had helped support and inform the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. The documents specifically helped support the housing numbers that had been attributed to the "other developable areas" or non-allocated sites in regeneration areas in the Local Plan.

The Local Plan identified 11 Regeneration Areas, and these were the focus of the Council's brownfield first housing delivery. Neighbourhood Frameworks aligned with the boundaries of the regeneration areas and set out the regeneration objectives and potential housing delivery within each area.

Many of the Regeneration areas also contained Masterplan areas. These were defined in the Local Plan in policy WS6.3. Masterplan areas were areas where significant change was expected and a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to development was required. Masterplans were planning documents and should be in place before development in the area could be approved. Masterplans could be progressed by a developer via a Planning application, or could be developed and endorsed by the Council.

Resolved – That

- 1. The process for adopting the Neighbourhood Frameworks and Masterplans as referred to in paragraph 3.1 of the report and the engagement process as described in 3.2 to 3.7 of the report be noted; and**
- 2. The process for endorsement of the Neighbourhood Frameworks and Masterplans as referred to in paragraph 3.8 and 3.9 of the report be agreed.**

53 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance. Members were informed that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee

Members queried the timescale for feasibility work on Birkenhead Market and were informed that it would not come to Committee until March 2024 at the earliest.

Members requested an update report on Mass Transit and a delivery workshop on Council House Building Options be added to the Work Programme.

Resolved – That the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be agreed with the inclusion of the above items.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Thursday, 7 December 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Jean Robinson	Chair
Abel Adegoke	Primary Care
Simon Banks	Director of Place (Wirral), NHS Cheshire and Merseyside
Dave Bradburn	Director of Public Health Wirral Council
Councillor Phil Gilchrist	Wirral Council
Councillor Jeff Green	Wirral Council
Elizabeth Hartley	Children's Services, Wirral Council
Louise Healey	Department for Work and Pensions
Graham Hodgkinson	Director of Adults and Care, Wirral Council
Mike McEvoy	Merseyside Police
David McGovern	Wirral University Teaching Hospital
Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde	Wirral Council
Kirsteen Sheppard	Healthwatch Wirral

23 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone and read the webcast notice.

24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Janette Williamson, Wirral Council.
- David Hughes, Head of Regeneration and Place, Wirral Council.
- Janelle Holmes and Sir David Henshaw, Wirral University Teaching Hospital.
- Julie Gray, Clatterbridge Cancer Centre
- Karen Howell and Michael Brown, Wirral Community Health and Care.
- Superintendent Matthew Moscrop, Merseyside Police.
- Andy Lomas from Magenta Living.

25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interests.

26 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 21 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

27 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question

One question had been received from the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector Reference Group (CVF RG)

Who developed and what was and is the process and criteria for developing and delivering £86k of “green grants” as part of a recently awarded contract of £413k through the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and why hasn't the CVF-RG proposal been incorporated into the planning?

The Chair promised a written answer to the question.

Statement

Kevin Sutton presented a statement on behalf of Community, Voluntary and Faith sector Reference Group, in respect of agenda item 13, Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector Reference Group update. The statement sought to inform the Board of the need to improve how communication, engagement, working together and representation needed to be improved and developed further to address health inequalities. More specifically, it stated that partnership working could be greatly enhanced with the focus on community-led programmes. It noted that CVF RG had been established as a volunteer group with aims to build and support the development of local infrastructure and work in full partnership to bring forward opportunities and benefits for communities arising from legislation, ongoing strategies, policies, and programmes, taking into account, existing and emerging best practice. It stated that the Community, Voluntary, Faith and Social Enterprise representative organisation, namely Wirral CVS, had insufficient funding to build a team, and that CVF RG were not full involved in working groups and funding bid opportunities, and that their experience was being overlooked. It stated that it was essential to engage proactively with communities and residents to ensure that we are doing things from a ‘bottom-up’ approach that involves people with lived experience.

The Chair thanked Kevin for the statement.

28 HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY UPDATE AND THEMATIC REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY 1

The Director of Public Health introduced his report which set the Health & Wellbeing Strategy within the wider system context of related plans and strategies that were connected to the wellbeing of residents with a particular focus on employment. The report provided an overview of the implementation plan for the ‘game changers’ within each of the four priority areas and clarified the routes by which Board members would be kept informed of progress and involved in influencing the strategic direction. The employment topic included different elements including recruitment, worklessness, and training.

Members discussed specific aspects including how it related to care leavers, helping people with health conditions to stay in employment, jobs fairs and vacancies in the health sector.

Resolved: That

- 1. it be confirmed that this report represents an appropriate overview of the broader system context for the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.**
- 2. the proposed implementation plans for the priority areas be acknowledged.**
- 3. the proposals for future reporting, engagement, and involvement of the Board be agreed.**

29 **UPDATE RE NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL**

The Associate Director Transformation and Partnerships at Cheshire and Merseyside NHS and the Chief Executive of Wirral Council for Voluntary Services presented this report which provided an update on the development and implementation of the Wirral Neighbourhood Model which was one of the guiding priorities within the Wirral Health and Care Plan for 2023/24. The Neighbourhood Model was about getting communities to improve health locally bringing together local organisations, primary care and health partners. There were nine neighbourhoods identified and the Model had been rolled out across two with the highest levels of deprivation.

Members queried who was in the Core Groups in each neighbourhood and particular issues such as obesity in children and social isolation.

Resolved:

That the update given on the progress to date of the development and implementation of the Wirral Neighbourhood Model be noted.

30 **COST OF LIVING UPDATE**

The Policy and Strategy Lead presented the report of the Director of Public Health which provided an update on cost-of-living work being taken forward by Wirral Council and partner organisations of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The report offered an overview of the challenges residents and businesses were facing because of cost-of-living pressures and the mitigating actions that were in place to support them and help alleviate some of these pressures, including the Small Grants Scheme.

Members questioned the report and the support being offered by other organisations, the underspending on some grants as well as suggesting methods of reaching people not online and centralising the support so there was a common point of contact.

Resolved: That

- 1. the latest updates and activity that have/are being carried out by partner organisations be noted.**
- 2. appropriate joint arrangements and actions to help mitigate the impacts of the cost-of-living pressures on residents continue to be developed.**

31 CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND CLOSURE REPORT

The Director of Public Health presented his report which provided a summary on Wirral's use of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund as the time limited, one-off funding has concluded. The Fund was given to help the borough's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and was approximately £14 million. It had been used in many creative ways, mainly on local outbreak management such as testing, surveillance and support of vulnerable residents.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

32 DELIVERY OF WIRRAL HEALTH AND CARE PLAN

The Place Director (Wirral), NHS Cheshire and Merseyside presented his report which presented the delivery dashboard for the programmes within the Wirral Place Health and Care Plan. The dashboard was reviewed by the Strategy and Transformation Group and the Wirral Place Based Partnership Board on a monthly basis and provided an oversight of the whole programme portfolio, a monthly narrative update, and Red Amber Green (RAG) rating of overall programme delivery, benefits, risks, and issues. The Wirral Health and Care Plan was the collective plan on Wirral for how the health and care organisations across Wirral will work together to progress with agreed priorities and areas of work. These priorities were cognisant of, and support, the delivery of a number of key national and Wirral Place level strategic aims, including the Wirral Plan 2021-26 and Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27.

Possible specific future reports were noted, and the outcomes of some issues, such as the rates and consequences of remaining in hospital rather than being discharged with a suitable care package.

Resolved:

That the report which provides assurance on the delivery and oversight of the Health and Care Plan programmes to the WPBPB be noted.

33 **AGEING POPULATION REPORT**

The Senior Manager for Strategy, Commissioning and support from the Wirral Intelligence Service presented the report of the Director of Public Health which informed the Board about some projected demographic changes for Wirral and highlighted some potential implications. It showed a significant increase in life expectancy and decrease in birth rate which increased the proportion of older people (33% increase in the next 20 years) and particularly a longer time per person in poor health. The variations between Wards was noted. Sufficient social care would depend upon national agreements on funding although changes such as the use of technology would aid the additional requirements.

Resolved:
That the report be noted.

34 **BETTER CARE FUND (BCF) QUARTER 2 RETURN**

The Director of Care and Health introduced his report which summarises the mandatory Quarter 2 (Q2) report submitted to National Health Service England (NHSE). It provided data to demonstrate that there have been no changes to the capacity and demand assumptions as set out in Wirral's 2023/25 Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan. It also demonstrated continued compliance with the requirements of the BCF fund and that the NHSE outcomes for 2023/25 were being met.

Resolved: That

- 1. the continued compliance with the requirements of the BCF fund and that (NHSE) outcomes for 2023/25 are being met be noted.**
- 2. it be noted that there are no changes to the capacity and demand assumptions included in the 2023/25 Better Care Fund (BCF).**
- 3. it be noted that the information provided will enable the Health and Wellbeing Board to influence the deployment of BCF services within the lifespan of this plan (2023/25) and future plans.**
- 4. it be noted that the current position does not pose a risk to the Section 75 Agreement.**

35 **COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND FAITH SECTOR REFERENCE GROUP UPDATE**

Representatives of the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector Reference Group presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the latest updates and proposals from the Group, including detail on the two Family Hubs which had been launched. They emphasised how empowering local communities can help projects develop.

Resolved:

That the content of the reports of the Community Voluntary and Faith Sector Reference Group as appended to this report be noted.

36 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which gave the proposed work programme for the following Municipal Year.

Additional items were discussed including a report on the Wirral Plan showing the links to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

It was noted that the membership of the group had been discussed to help the Board focus on commissioning reports from relevant bodies as work on the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy continues.

Resolved:

That, subject to an additional item on the Wirral Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Board work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be noted.

PENSIONS COMMITTEE

Monday, 11 December 2023

Present:

Councillor J McManus (Chair)

Councillors A Ainsworth P Cleary
B Kenny R Molyneux
GJ Davies C Carubia
T Cox Lappin
A Gardner Bannister

R Bannister

29 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone and read out the webcasting notice.

The Chair informed the audience and those watching from home that the recording and live broadcast of the meeting would be audio only, due to technical difficulties with the camera equipment. The Chair was content for the meeting to be recorded by members of the audience but asked that no photographs be taken during the debate

30 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Cherry Povall, deputised by Councillor Andrew Gardner, Councillor Brenda Hall, deputised by Councillor Ritchie Pitt, and Councillor Martin Bond (St Helens).

31 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Usual declarations:

Councillor Julie McManus	Personal interest as her son is a member of Merseyside Pension Fund.
Roger Bannister	Pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Merseyside Pension Fund.
Councillor Tom Cardwell	Personal interest as his mother is a member of Merseyside Pension Fund.
Councillor George Davies	Personal interest as his wife is a member of Merseyside Pension Fund.
Councillor Andrew Gardener	Pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Merseyside Pension Fund.
Councillor Brian Kenny	Personal interest as his fiancée is a member

	of Merseyside Pension Fund.
Councillor Paulette Lappin	Pecuniary interest by virtue of being a member of Merseyside Pension Fund

32 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the Pensions Committee meeting held on 26 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

33 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

33.1 **Public Questions**

Four questions were received.

Greg Dropkin asked the following question. The arms industry is a major contributor to climate change, and the war on Gaza and ongoing siege is both an environmental and social disaster. How will the Responsible Investment Working Party of the Pensions Committee address these issues in relation to Merseyside Pension Fund investments in the arms industry in general, and in US and UK companies which supply components and weapons used on Gaza in particular?

Chair gave response. MPF takes its responsibilities as an asset owner seriously. Our policy of Responsible Investment (RI) arises from the belief that ESG factors can materially affect investment performance.

We place great importance on active ownership as our means of managing and shaping ESG matters and are mindful of the responsibility of investors to respect human rights as set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

We seek to maximise our influence and finite resources through collaborative working; be that with other local government pension schemes through the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), with our Northern LGPS partner funds (Greater Manchester & West Yorkshire) or wider investor groups such as the Institutional Investor Group on Climate Change (IIGCC).

Subject to agenda item 8 being considered and approved by this Committee, as set out in the draft terms of reference, the Responsible Investment Working Party will support Pensions Committee in the consideration and development of its responsible investment policy, climate change and stewardship activities. Under LGPS regulations and guidance, whilst the overriding duty of the Members of Pensions Committee is the pursuit of financial return within reasonable risk parameters in order to pay pensions, non-financial considerations may be taken into account provided that doing so would not

involve significant risk of financial detriment to the scheme and where Members have good reason to think that scheme members would support their decision. It is also worth noting that any pension shortfall arising from investment performance falls to Scheme employers to make up and not employees.

Any company with operations or interests in conflict-affected & high-risk area should undertake enhanced due diligence to assess the human rights risks and mitigation options. This approach is consistent with our developing stewardship policy, which considers human rights as a global systemic risk best managed collaboratively with other investors using an evidence-led outcomes-focused approach. MPF has endorsed the new Advance initiative from the UNPRI as part of this work, which brings together institutional investors to advance human rights and positive outcomes for people through investor stewardship. The Initiative will primarily seek change through investors' use of influence with portfolio companies.

All right-minded individuals deplore the loss of life arising from conflict. There is a wide range of opinion on the merits of investment in defence companies for Committee to balance. Recent events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine have thrown into relief the necessity of armaments in upholding sovereignty and maintaining social stability by deterring states from carrying out acts of aggression against others. Peacekeeping forces also need to be suitably equipped. It is also the case that licences for the export of armaments are regulated and a matter of government policy.

It is intended that the Responsible Investment Working Party will allow Committee to develop further the framework within which ESG matters are considered and monitored. I do not have to hand information on whether the Pension Fund has investments in defence companies that sell arms to Israel or Saudi Arabia. It would depend upon how defence companies and their products were defined, and how one defined the buyers since supply chains can be complex.

I will ask the proposed Responsible Investment Working Party to look into the nature and extent of the Pension Fund's investments in companies connected with the trade. As well as seeking to mitigate the environmental impact of its investments, MPF seeks investments that provide positive environmental and social benefits. Item 9 on today's agenda gives a few examples of these types of investments and there are many other examples nationally and internationally.

I will ask the proposed Responsible Investment Working Party to look into the nature and extent of the Pension Fund's investments in companies connected with the defence trade. Merseyside Pension Fund publishes on its website a full list of its shareholdings across all markets and this list is updated on a quarterly basis.

This response was also the appropriate answer to the three following questions.

Greg Dropkin asked a supplementary question, had the committee considered the additional evidence he submitted?

The chair responded that a more in-depth response would be provided in writing.

Prue Stothard asked a question. Is the Committee aware that MPF funds are being invested in companies whose products are used to kill men, women and children in Gaza, the West Bank and in Yemen, and how does this knowledge affect your decisions on Responsible Investments?

Prue Stothard asked a supplementary question; who has decided who will make up the group of the responsible investments working party?

The Chair informed the questioner that the group had yet to decide its membership but it will be decided by this committee and it will contain members of this committee.

Tony Norbury asked a question. As Merseyside pensioner in receipt of the Merseyside pension fund I do not want my pension to be funded or to fund the arms trade in any shape or form. I would like to ask the councillors on the pensions committee to start the process to divest any funds from our Merseyside pensions fund investments from being used to support the arms trade anywhere in the world. We have seen in our lifetimes and particularly in recent times what slaughter weapons of mass destruction fired into civilian areas against United nations humanitarian law can do to innocent families particularly children. I do not want any part in that cowardly act of murder, I do not want my hard-earned deferred wages (my pension) invested in destruction. The human race has reached a cross roads in our humanitarian evolution, we are losing our planet and our ecosystems are breaking down because of the greed of the few. I am one of the many pensioners that wants to see our Merseyside pension invested in humanitarian projects , projects that will protect our planet not destroy it, projects that will give our children and their grandchildren a better future not slaughter them I ask the councillors who sit on the pensions committee to take the right road and lead us to sustainability and humanitarian longevity, people living in peace and harmony with our planet and each other ,for that's where I believe we need to evolve to because the other road does not bare thinking about.

Tony Norbury asked a supplementary question about ethical investments and asked the committee to consider more sustainable investments.

Helen Dickson asked a question. Do the Pensions Committee know that MPF investments contribute to civilian deaths in Gaza and Yemen and nuclear weapons systems?

Helen Dickson asked a supplementary question. Would the Merseyside Pension Fund commit to assuring that Members are aware of the facts surrounding investments.

The Chair assured all questioners that an in-depth answer would be provided in writing in response to their supplementary questions.

33.2 **Statements and Petitions**

Two Statements were received.

Mike Hogan gave the following statement; Over twenty thousand people have been murdered, of which ten thousand were children. They were killed using weapons provided by the companies which are listed as investments of this pension fund. We are seeing this news and questioning what can be done, there is something that can be done, cut off funding to the war machine that has been unleashed on Gaza, leaving thousands of people dead, injured or displaced. What is being created is an uninhabitable Gaza strip. A local nurse has testified that operations are now being performed without anaesthetic. We have the power to withdraw the money that funds the companies that cause this. One company highlighted, Caterpillar, creates the bulldozers that destroy civilian housing, which leads to homeless refugees.

Piara Miah gave the following statement; I am a Wirral resident who conducts outreach work within the community. The harrowing images coming from Gaza have captured the community. I have first hand experience of supporting refugees fleeing this crisis and know that we need dedicated people who can help these people settle after escaping a war torn country. By investing in the manufacturing and selling of weapons of mass destruction we are funding genocide. The pension fund should invest in building communities and not weapons of war. Make the members of the pension aware of how their money is being invested.

Roger Bannister made the following statement, which was permitted at the Chairs discretion as no prior notice of the statement was given; Unison and I agree with the aims represented by the public present at the meeting. Detailed discussions have taken place in the past with Councillor Jo Bird around the Fund's attitude to investments in Israel and Israeli companies and time has been wasted by deferring a decision. I support the establishment of the working party and the view that the decision must be taken with haste before decision-making abilities are removed by the current government.

34 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS) UPDATE - THE MCCLOUD REMEDY**

The Head of Pensions Administration introduced the report to Members. The report provided an update on legislation related to the 'McCloud Remedy', and the guidance that had been published to support implementation by the Fund's Administration Team.

Resolved – that the committee note the legislative change to remove the age discrimination from the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), and that implementation of the revised regulations is a major resource intensive project to ensure the Fund's continued compliance in delivering the 'McCloud Remedy'.

35 **ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING PARTY**

The Director of Merseyside Pension Fund introduced the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek approval from Members for the establishment of an additional Working Party to consider responsible investment issues and stewardship activities. Core Members would be the Chair and the Party Spokespersons (or their deputies), but all Members would be invited to attend and participate since the main purpose of the Working Party was to spread knowledge amongst Members of the important issues raised by responsible investment so that informed decisions can be made by Members at Committee

Members requested that members of the Local Pension Board should also be included in invitations to the working party, discussed ways in which to reflect the views of the public such as those that attended the meeting with their questions, the need to keep in mind the speed in which issues are progressed, and were conscious of the difficulty in changing long term investments.

Councillor Cleary moved, seconded by Councillor Molyneux; that the Responsible Investment Working Party be established as discussed and that it consider the issue of Merseyside pension fund investments in arms companies and bring a report to the committee within the next six months.

Councillor Ainsworth moved the following amendment, seconded by Councillor Kenny; that the Responsible Investment Working Party submit to the Pensions Committee a programme of work within the next 6 months and that those words be substituted for that part of Councillor Cleary's motion that required it to consider and produce a report on the Fund's investments in arms companies within that period of time. Members voted for the amendment (11:2). The amendment was passed and became the substantive motion which was passed unanimously.

Resolved – that the establishment of the Responsible Investment Working Party be approved with the membership as discussed and that it submit to the Pensions Committee a programme of work within the next six months.

36 **CATALYST FUND UPDATE**

The Director of Merseyside Pension Fund introduced the report to Members. The report provided Members with an update on the progress of the Fund's local investment activities.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

37 **WIRRAL LOCAL PENSION BOARD MINUTES**

The Chair introduced this report which provided Members with the draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Wirral Local Pension Board.

Resolved - That the minutes of the Wirral Local Pension Board be noted.

38 **MINUTES OF WORKING PARTY MEETINGS**

The Chair introduced this report which provided Members with the minutes of meetings of Working Parties held since the previous Committee meeting.

Members appreciate the variety of considerations undertaken.

Resolved - That the minutes of the working parties be approved.

39 **NORTHERN LGPS UPDATE**

The Director of Pensions introduced the report to the Committee. The report provided Members with an update on pooling arrangements in respect of Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) and the Northern LGPS Investment Pool. Minutes of the previous Northern LGPS Joint Committee meeting were appended for noting.

Resolved - That the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting be noted.

40 **REVISED INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Director of Merseyside Pension Fund introduced the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek approval from Members for a revised investment strategy for Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) which had been the subject of consideration and discussion at recent Investment Monitoring

Working Parties. The expectation was that the revised strategy would deliver superior risk adjusted returns and a higher level of income.

Members thanked the officers for their work, noting it had been very constructive, and had evolved into a sensible strategy. In response to a member query in regard to information about when the responsible investment and climate risks workstreams would be brought to Committee, officers advised Members that the additional working party should allow the Committee more time to consider and expedite these issues.

Resolved - That the investment strategy and strategic asset allocation and the actions and recommendations set out in appendix 1 be approved.

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Present:

Councillor	J Johnson (Chair)	
Councillors	GJ Davies	I Lewis
	P Basnett	S Kelly
	M Skillicorn	N Graham
Independent Persons	J Byrne	

28 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy was retained on the Council's website.

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

30 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

- Cllr Naomi Graham declared a personal interest by virtue of her husband's employment, and pecuniary interests by virtue of being a member of Merseyside Pension Fund and employment for a charity that delivers educational services for the Council.
- Councillor Paula Basnett declared personal interests by virtue of being a Foster Carer, a member of the town deal board and the Chair of Wirral Chamber of Commerce.

31 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023, be approved.

32 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no questions, petitions or statements received for this meeting.

33 2022/23 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT, EXTERNAL AUDITOR FINDINGS REPORTS. 2021/22 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT.

The Senior Finance Business Partner presented the report of the Director of Finance which brought the final 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, the Audit Findings Reports of Wirral Council and Merseyside Pension, alongside the Annual Governance Statement for approval by the Committee as statutorily required on behalf of the Council. The report also presented the 2021/22 Annual Audit Report. The Senior Finance Business Partner highlighted a number of areas of note within the Statement of Accounts including levels of earmarked reserves, the removal of the requirement to produce group accounts, and increases in capital spend since production of the draft accounts.

The Head of Finance - Corporate notified to Members that further amendments to the Accounts were to be undertaken following a technical review by Grant Thornton. These related to amending a technical wording disclosure, the presentation of profits from the Wirral Growth Company, and the point of valuation of a school that had been brought back into the Council's Accounts. It was reported that the amendments were not anticipated to materially change the Accounts.

Representatives from Grant Thornton discussed the Audit Findings Reports detailed within the report which included observations relating to Council debt levels, heritage assets, and completeness of the fixed assets register. It was noted that the Audit work was substantially complete pending completion of work relating to Value of Money arrangements, and an unqualified opinion was anticipated for both the Council and Merseyside Pension Fund.

Members discussed the impact of scheduled regeneration projects on future accounts. The importance of the committee's role in scrutinising systemic risk relating to capacity and delivery taking into account the funding deadlines associated with those projects was noted. Members also explored Council management's responses to recommendations within the Audit Findings Report. In response to queries, The Director of Finance provided assurance that increases in debt levels related primarily to planned borrowing requirements for regeneration as part of the capital programme rather than any speculative investment.

Resolved – That

- 1. The changes to the draft 2022/23 Accounts and the External Audit Findings Reports for Wirral Council and Merseyside Pension Fund be noted;**
- 2. The Final 2022/23 Accounts (Council and Merseyside Pension Fund) be approved as presenting a true and fair view of the Council's and Merseyside Pension Fund's income and expenditure for the year and its overall financial position;**

- 3. The Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 be approved;**
 - 4. The Letters of Representation for Wirral Council and Merseyside Pension Fund be approved; and**
 - 5. The 2021/22 Annual Audit Report be approved.**
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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 December 2023

Present: Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors J Williamson S Mountney
P Gilchrist L Rennie
A Davies P Cleary
S Powell-Wilde H Gorman
T Jones J Bird
JE Green S Foulkes (In place
of J Robinson)
H Cameron J McManus (In
place of EA Grey)

80 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

81 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Liz Grey and Jean Robinson.

82 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other disclosable interests.

Councillor Steve Foulkes and Sue Powell-Wilde declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as members of Planning Committee.

Councillor Lesley Rennie declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as a member of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist declared a personal interest in agenda item 15 as the documents referred to an organisation in which he held personal savings. Councillor Gilchrist outlined that he had sought advice on the matter, and it did not meet the test for exclusion.

Councillor Jeff Green declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as a Director of Wirral Growth Company.

83 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 8 November 2023 and 21 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

84 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that one public question had been received by Mr Philip Barton. Mr Barton asked whether the Committee would commit funding to undertake required structural survey works at Tranmere Tunnels. In response the Chair outlined that he would ask the Director of Finance and Director of Regeneration and Place to establish and provide the cost of the structural survey works to the Chair and Spokes to consider whether a further report on the matter was required.

85 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

The Chair reported that four people had registered to make a statement in relation to agenda item 6 'Sale of land at Arrowe Park Road, Upton'.

Stephanie Miller made a statement opposed to the sale of land at Arrowe Park Road, outlining issues relating to development on greenspace contrary to the Local Plan's brownfield first principle, the existing acute traffic pressures owing to the existing businesses and the impact on the Council's commitment to tackle the Climate Emergency.

Councillor Stephen Bennett made a statement outlining the concerns of residents of Upton Ward at the propose to sell develop on greenspace, as well as the impact on public rights of way on the land and how the proposal was contrary to the Council's Parking Strategy.

Councillor Jean Robinson made a statement outlining the requirements of the Open Spaces Act, the significant opposition to the advertisement of the sale of public land with 1,400 residents objecting, and the implications on the Local Plan if the land were to be sold for development.

Councillor Liz Grey made a statement which detailed the difficulty for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in navigating the roundabout currently, including parents taking their children to and from school via the site. Councillor Grey also detailed the impact the sale would have on air pollution, and the potential of the site with 16 mature trees and the possibility of further tree planting.

86 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The Chair reported that there were no questions by members.

87 SALE OF LAND AT ARROWE PARK ROAD, UPTON

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report which present options to committee for either the retention or sale of land at Arrowe Park Road, Upton to Lidl Great Britain Limited (Lidl) for the sum of £840,000.

It was reported that the Committee had previously approved the sale of the site in October 2020 subject to notices being placed for the proposed sale of open space and the appropriation of land. The notices had generated objections referenced in the report and the sale was not progressed. Since then, Lidl had increased the offer to purchase the land and changed the red line regarding the site required and given the length of time since the previous decision, was before the Committee for determination.

The Committee considered the proposed sale of the land, and it was highlighted that the Committee had previously resolved to sell the land due to the capital receipt, ongoing business rates and creation of jobs it would create. Members however further noted the local opposition to the proposed sale as well implications on the Local Plan and the sale being subject to Planning consent without onerous conditions. It was highlighted that the Committee had made significant progress with its asset disposals but had opted to not dispose of Carrs Agricultural Land at Meols due to its impact on greenspace, and that the Committee might be minded to follow the same course.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved (Unanimously) – That the land at Arrowe Park Road, Upton be retained by the Council and not be declared surplus and disposed to Lidl GB Ltd, considering information contained in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

88 **FUTURE REGENERATIONS PARTNERSHIPS FOR WIRRAL**

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced a report which sought approval to establish a Wirral Regeneration Partnership to steer, support and coordinate the Council's priority projects including the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Masterplans. It was reported to the Committee that the Birkenhead 2040 Framework detailed a comprehensive regeneration vision that would deliver 21,000 new homes and 6000 new jobs in Birkenhead over the following 20 years, and a framework of that scale required a joined-up approach to a number of regeneration-based activities.

The Committee discussed the governance of the board, noting that the Partnership would adopt the Nolan Principles of Public Life and the minutes of the meetings would be submitted to the relevant Policy and Services Committee. Following a query in relation to the consideration of environmental factors, it was confirmed that the Partnership would work within the priorities of Wirral Council.

Resolved – That

- (1) the establishment of the Wirral Regeneration Partnership and associated hierarchy comprising membership and terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.**
- (2) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to proceed with the necessary memorandum of understanding to establish appropriate legal and governance structures for the Wirral Regeneration Partnership.**

89 SCHEDULE OF RATES CONTRACT FOR ELECTRICAL WORKS

The Assistant Director for Asset Management introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which sought authority to accept the tender submitted by KDE Ltd for a 2-year contract for electrical works. It was outlined that the contract included day to day responsive repairs, installation and planned maintenance, including out of hours emergency works.

Members discussed the importance of social value particularly in the context of awarding contracts to local firms who employ Wirral residents. Officers were encouraged to give consideration to community wealth building when awarding contracts.

Resolved – That KDE Ltd be awarded the schedule of rates contract for initial 2-year period with an option to extend for a further year to undertake day to day responsive repairs, installation, and planned maintenance of electrical works, within approved budget and in accordance with the most economically advantageous tender criteria.

90 WALLASEY AND BIRKENHEAD TOWN HALL UPDATE AND PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

The Assistant Director for Asset Management introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which provided an update on the status of both Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Hall including the current changes in the service provided from the buildings and an update on the progress on the planned demolition of the two annex buildings at Wallasey Town Hall. The report also outlined that both Town Halls fell within areas of Master Planning and Regeneration and requested funding to procure a targeted feasibility study of the two Town Halls in relation to future uses by a specialist company experienced in heritage stock, linking to the Master Planning.

The Committee discussed the future use of the Town Hall and assurances were given that any specialist appointed for feasibility works would consider the importance of the heritage status of the buildings. Members considered

the timescales for the demolition of the annexe buildings and the feasibility study, where officers advised that the scheduled demolition of the annexe buildings was on track, and that a further update could be provided on the progress of the feasibility studies in February 2024.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That

- (1) the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Neighbourhood Services progress the required feasibility work and Condition Survey refresh on both Town Hall sites.**
- (2) the Director of Regeneration and Place be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee detailing the findings of feasibility studies and presenting options and business cases in respect to the future use of both Town Halls and alternative recommendations for the Committees consideration.**
- (3) Wallasey Town Hall remains stood down until the completion of works outlined in this report and until receipt of the report to Policy and Resources detailing the findings of the feasibility report and condition surveys.**
- (4) a briefing note be circulated to all members of P&R by the end of February 2024 on the progress made in relation to the feasibility studies.**

91 **INTRODUCTION OF ERP SYSTEM**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Investment introduced the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the implementation of the new Enterprise Resource Planning system Oracle Fusion. Members were advised of the complexities in the implementation of a system of that scale and the difficulties other Local Authorities had faced. It was reported that the go-live date for the implementation of the system had been delayed from 2022/23 to 2023.24, but that the system had since been delivered within the revised timescale with no interruption to service delivery and within the approved budget envelope. The Committee was further reminded of the decision to change the scope of the project so that Oracle Fusion interfaced with the existing HR system as opposed to replacing it.

The Committee considered the original business case for the system against what was delivered, and officers were encouraged to consider the lessons learned from the project in relation to future business case scoping. It was

noted that external partners had engaged in training Council staff and assurances were given to members that staff had been upskilled in the technical elements of the system and that the training process was ongoing.

Members placed on record their thanks to the project team for the delivery of the project.

Resolved – That the progress made on the implementation of the project, the realisation of benefits and the lessons learned information be noted.

92 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the work programme which provided an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year be noted.

93 **EXTERNAL AUDITORS CONSOLIDATED REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance which set out the Council's response to the recommendations detailed within the External Audit Report 2020-21.

It was flagged that the covering reports for the Assurance on Regeneration Schemes and Social Impact Fund Investment had been marked as exempt but had been made public when considered at Audit and Risk Management Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 19.16pm and resumed at 19.25pm.

Following a discussion, Councillor Tony Jones declared a personal interest in the agenda item as a former Director of Wirral Growth Company.

Members considered the content of the reports and the Director of Finance outlined the process for benchmarking financial performance against geographical and statistical neighbours. It was raised that the External Audit report raised issues regarding the oversight and scrutiny of the governance of the Wirral Growth Company and assurances were sought that lessons would be learned prior to any future possible joint venture or delivery vehicles. In response, the Director of Law and Governance outlined that the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee had resolved to consider the future of the Wirral Growth Company and that piece of work would build upon the recommendations made by Grant Thornton.

Resolved – That reports and the updated response to the external auditors’ recommendations be noted.

94 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

The above test was applied to documents at Audit and Risk Management Committee and has not been correctly applied to the documents at P&R. This means that the following documents should not have an exemption maintained and should be moved into the public domain:

**Assurance on Regeneration Schemes covering report
Social impact fund investment covering report**

The other documents included within the agenda pack marked as exempt should remain excluded by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 11 January 2024

Present:

Councillor S Kelly (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes
H Gorman
K Hodson
C Baldwin
M Booth

B Kenny
J Stewart Laing
G McManus
S Powell-Wilde
J Walsh

51 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed Members of the Planning Committee, Officers, members of the public and those watching the webcast to the meeting.

52 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received.

53 **MINUTES**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9 November 2023.

Resolved – That the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9 November 2023 be approved.

54 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of the Committee were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item on the agenda and if so, to declare them and state what they were.

No such declarations were made.

55 **RVC/23/01413: 100 & 102 MEOLS DRIVE, CH48 5DB, SECTION 73 APPLICATION FOR THE VARIATION OF CONDITION 2 OF CONSENTED SCHEME REF APP/20/01716 TO REMOVE BASEMENT AND PROVIDE PARKING AT GROUND LEVEL, TOGETHER WITH INTERNAL LAYOUT ALTERATIONS AND TO PICK UP AN ERROR IN THE APPROVED SOUTH ELEVATION PLAN IN RESPECT OF RIDGE HEIGHTS.**

The Development Management Manager referred to an issue that had arisen further to the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place in relation to

the above application. He indicated that a plan which had been submitted by the applicant had a discrepancy as regards the stated scale. This had been corrected on the afternoon of 11 January 2024 by submission of a revised plan. In order to enable the fairness of the application process he strongly recommended that the consideration of the matter be deferred to enable further public consultation to take place on the application, given the submission of the revised plan.

Resolved – that the consideration of this application be deferred to subsequent meeting to enable appropriate further public consultation to take place.

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 15 January 2024

Present: Councillor J Johnson (Chair)

Councillors GJ Davies I Lewis
P Basnett S Kelly
M Skillicorn N Graham

Independent Persons J Byrne

34 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy was retained on the Council's website.

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

36 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Councillor Paula Basnett declared personal interests by virtue of being a Foster Carer, a member of the town deal board and the Chair of Wirral Chamber of Commerce.

37 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023, be approved.

38 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no questions, petitions or statements received for this meeting.

39 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

The Chief Internal Auditor presented his report which identified and evaluated the performance of the internal audit service and included details of any issues arising from the actual work and items of note undertaken during the

period 1 October to 31 December 2023. In addition, the Internal Audit Quality Assurance Programme Self-Assessment, Internal Audit Charter and Internal Audit Strategy, as required under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) were reported to the committee.

Members discussed challenges relating to implementation of the outstanding Climate Emergency audit recommendations. The Chief Internal Auditor confirmed that outstanding actions were cross-directorate in nature and that senior management were engaged in work to ensure the Council remained on target to achieve its objectives in this area. Members also discussed progress of actions relating to the Council's Matrix System review and Member engagement in relation to future delivery of the Council's waste commission contract.

The Chair, in light of recent national focus on the Post Office scandal proposed that the Committee should remain committed to learn from identified weaknesses and failings from elsewhere in the public sector and review the Committee's own Terms of Reference as appropriate. The Chief Internal Auditor affirmed that the internal audit service routinely sought to incorporate outcomes and lessons learned across developments elsewhere in the public sector.

Resolved – That

- 1. The report be noted; and**
- 2. The Internal Audit Charter and Strategy be endorsed.**

40 **ARMC ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual report for 2022-23, which was prepared by the respective Chairs of the Committee in consultation with internal audit and summarised work undertaken by the committee during the period in line with best professional practice.

Resolved – That the Annual Report for 2022-23 be approved and submitted to Council.

41 **ARMC ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT 2023**

The Chief Internal Auditor presented his report which provided the Annual Self-Assessment for 2023. In line with best professional practice the Self-Assessment exercise had been completed, which reported an evaluation of the Committee's role and effectiveness as part of the systems of internal audit. A number of key actions had been identified following the exercise to improve and develop the Committee going forward.

Members discussed the action plan within the report, and queried how Committee Members would be assessed against the CIPFA Core Knowledge and Skills Framework. The Chief Internal Auditor confirmed that a survey in line with this framework would be circulated to Members which would inform future training and development. Members also discussed how a system of obtaining feedback from stakeholders on the performance of the Committee could be developed, alongside challenges relating to recruitment of an additional Independent Member on the Committee.

Resolved – That the Self-Assessment checklist of compliance and the action plan be approved.

42 **CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Risk, Continuity & Compliance Manager presented the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on activity related to the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers and the Council's risk management arrangements. Outcomes of the latest review of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) by the Senior Leadership Team were reported to Committee. The review had been informed by meetings between the Risk, Continuity & Compliance Manager and Directors to review Directorate Risks. Notable changes to the CRR included the splitting of the Workforce Capacity & Skills to Deliver risk into two separate risks, a drop in the current/residual risk score for Safeguarding, and a new risk developed to reflect preparedness for statutory inspections. It was also reported that in light of the New Council Plan 2023-27, the CRR would undergo realignment against the new themes of the plan, whilst it was noted that a Member risk workshop had taken place for Members of the Council's Policy & Resources Committee.

Members discussed the outcomes of a Chair and Spokespersons risk management session held in January 2024 and referenced discussions at previous committee meetings in which risks associated to the delivery of regeneration projects were highlighted. Following a discussion, it was:

Resolved – That

- 1. The report be noted; and**
- 2. The Director of Regeneration and Place be requested to attend the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee in March 2024 to present a risk report to committee Members on all Directorate Risks.**

43 **EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

A representative from Grant Thornton presented the report which provided a progress update on the work undertaken by the external auditor, alongside a sector update which included a summary of emerging national issues and areas for consideration for the Committee.

The Chair reported that the Annual Audit Report had been delayed which did not allow the Committee to respond to matters in a timely manner given some three months has now passed since the date set under legislation for it to be presented to councils. It was noted that the report once received was now unlikely to be presented to Committee until March 2024.

A representative from Grant Thornton confirmed that the Annual Audit Report had undergone senior quality review process and would be shared imminently with Council management for review and comments. Members requested that the Director of Finance circulated the report to Committee Members once the report had been received and reviewed by Council management reviewed prior to the next Committee meeting in March.

Resolved – That the update provided by the Council’s external auditors be noted.

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

Present:

Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors	J Robinson	H Cameron
	P Gilchrist	S Mountney
	EA Grey	L Rennie
	A Davies	P Cleary
	S Powell-Wilde	H Gorman
	T Jones	J Bird
	JE Green	J McManus

95 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

96 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Janette Williamson. Councillor Julie McManus was in attendance as substitute.

97 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Jeff Green declared a personal interest by virtue of a family member employed by Peel LLP.

98 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held 13 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

99 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Chair informed Members that no public or Members questions, statements or petitions had been received.

100 **REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSURANCE PANEL**

The Chair of the Independent Assurance Panel attended virtually and presented the third update report. The Panel had been set up to oversee the Council's improvement in response to the external assurance review commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

(DLUHC) which was published in November 2021. The External Assurance Review was undertaken as a condition of the Council's request for exceptional finance support in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

The Chair of the Independent Assurance Panel Informed Members that they had been very encouraged by the progress of the Council over the last six months, noting that the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and Wirral Plan had been considered by the Panel and were now better aligned.

The Chair of the Panel raised concerns regarding the delivery of the Capital Programme, specifically the regeneration programme and noted that a robust financial monitoring framework should be in place to provide assurance. General improvements noted were better cross-party working, and improved trust in the financial figures received by Members.

Members were advised that the Panel were to meet with Group Leaders and council officers following Budget Council, after which it was hoped that support would be led by the Local Government Association.

The Chair proceeded to thank the Panel for the support and challenge provided by them over the years and noted that whilst Local Government Settlement had not been the figure that officers had anticipated, they were confident of a balanced budget for 2024/25. The Chair also voiced his appreciation for the increase in cross-party working and support from Group Leaders and Members for during both Budget setting discussions and in formulating the new Wirral Plan 2024-27.

These comments were echoed by Members who endorsed the increased level of trust and cross-party working across the Council. Members also noted the requirement to monitor the regeneration projects, as well as further development of the Performance Management Framework which formed part of the Council Plan 2024-27.

Resolved – that the content of the letter be noted.

101 COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATION

The Director of Finance presented the report which brought together related issues regarding the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 upon which the annual billing and Council Tax levels would be set.

Members were informed that the report set out how the Council Tax Band D equivalent was calculated, by considering changes such as new builds, demolitions, discounts and exemptions as well as the empty property discount. A further calculation was then undertaken with the expected collection rate. Members were informed that the collection rate had gone

down marginally based on last year and it was assumed that the cost of living crisis had made a small impact on collections. The Director of Finance explained that the income generated via Council Tax collection was forecast to be just over £180m which represented 45% of the Council's funding.

Resolved – that the figure of 95,993.93 as the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 be approved.

102 **COUNCIL TAX 2024/25 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME, DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS**

The Director of Finance presented the report which brought together related issues regarding the proposed Council Tax Discounts including Local Discounts, Exemptions, and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be used during 2024/25. Members were informed that approval was required by Council before 11 March 2024.

Members were advised that whilst the report was similar to reports presented in previous years, there were two additional changes recommended for 2024/25. This included increasing the empty property premium for premises that had been empty for more than one year to 200%, as well as a proposed change to the treatment of second homes (dwellings that are furnished but are not someone's sole or main residence). In regards to the latter change, Members were informed that a year's notice had to be provided, so the earliest this change could come into effect would be 2025.

Members voiced their approval that provision of Care Leavers Discount, the 100% discount awarded to Wirral Women's and Children's Aid and the Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme was to continue. Also discussed was the number of empty properties in Wirral, including those of social landlords, where it was noted that empty properties can lead to Anti-Social Behaviour. Members were also informed that the projected figures for the Empty Home Premium was just under £1m, however due to the 12 months' notice people may choose to find different uses for their second home before the premium was applied.

Members also discussed the subject of housing, as well as the governance and oversight of housing issues within the Council and it was noted that the work programme for the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committees had housing reports programmed for future consideration.

RECOMMEND – to Council that,

The level and award of each local discount for 2024/25 be as follows: -

1. Wirral Women's & Children's Aid

To continue to award Wirral Women & Children's Aid 100% discount. This remains unchanged from 2023/24.

2. Care Leaver's Discount

To award Care Leavers the requisite discount to reduce their Council Tax liability to zero until they are 25. This remains unchanged from 2023/24.

3. Empty Property Discounts 2024/25

Discount category D = 0% Full charge on properties undergoing renovations.

Discount category C = 0% Full charge on empty properties from date they become unoccupied.

Both to remain unchanged from 2023/24, and to include an exception for properties requiring adaptations to meet the need of a disabled person who will be occupying the property as soon as the adaptations are complete. This also applies to properties awaiting renovations prior to being occupied by someone under Ukraine resettlement scheme.

To reduce the Empty Property Premium from 2024/25 to properties that have been empty for more than one year (Currently Two).

So that the following apply: -

100% (200% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty for more than one year.

200% (300% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty more than five years.

300% (400% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty more than ten years.

4. Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme

The Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme, approved by Cabinet in October 2013, to continue in its current format for 2024/25. The Scheme offers help and assistance in exceptional cases of hardship. Appendix 1

5. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS)

The current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to remain unchanged from 2023/24 apart from the following:

a. The scheme to be aligned to all the Department of Work and Pensions uprating's and changes for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

b. There to be no loss of entitlement due to payments made under government defined compensation schemes.

6. Changes to the treatment of second homes (dwellings that are furnished but are not someone's sole or main residence)

From 1 st April 2025 the council to charge an additional 100% council tax (200% Council Tax) for any person with a second home within Wirral.

103 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 3 2023/24**

The Director of Finance presented the report which provided Members with an update on the progress of the Capital Programme 2023/24 at the end of December 2023.

The report recommended that Committee agreed the revised 2023/24 Capital Programme of £97 million which took into account of re-profiling, variations, additional funding requirements and grant variations identified since the Capital Programme was formally agreed on 27th February 2023 and revised via the Capital Outturn 2022-23 report.

Members were informed of additional grant funding, various schemes as highlighted in section 3.7, as well as the public sector de-carbonisation scheme. Further clarification was also given to Members on Birkenhead Market funding and Maritime Knowledge Hub.

Members also requested further information on various aspects of the report, including allotment site expansion, catering units and defibrillators. A request was made to consider a further allocation of funds in future years for highways maintenance and pothole repairs before further deterioration occurred.

Councillors Jean Robinson and Jeff Green left the room due to their interests as Directors of Wirral Growth Company and took no part in the discussion or vote.

Resolved – that,

- 1. the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 in this report be approved.**

2. the changes to the programme detailed in section 3.8 be approved.
3. the revised Capital Programme of £97 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of this report be approved.

104 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the work programme which provided an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

A request for performance monitoring workshops and a referral from Council regarding Borough of Sanctuary status were added to the work programme.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year be noted with the above additions.

105 **MINUTES OF THE SENIOR OFFICER AND STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Chair introduced the minutes of the Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee which was held on 5th December 2023.

Members queried the possible need for a Human Resources sub-committee and asked that the chief officer structured be circulated to Members.

Also discussed were exempt reports published in the agenda, noting that some of the contents contained within the reports were already in the public domain. The Head of Legal Service explained that the report in question was exempt as it contained the personal information of individuals and that the exemption had been moved by the committee. The Council and Merseyside Pension Fund was also commended upon by Members for providing employment opportunities for care leavers.

Resolved – that the minutes of the Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee held on 5th December 2023 be noted.

ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 January 2024

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors GJ Davies J Bird
R Pitt E Lamb
M Skillicorn E Tomeny
A Hodson H Raymond
A Gardner A Davies (for G Wood)

55 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website for two years.

56 APOLOGIES

Councillor Gill Wood sent her apologies. Councillor Angie Davies substituted.

57 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any items on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 9; 2024-25 Budget Report Update, regarding the Homes for Ukraine Resettlement Programme as he had people living with him under this scheme and was in receipt of payments from the council.

58 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

59 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions, statements or petitions from the public or Councillors had been received.

59.1 Public Questions

The Chair noted that at the previous meeting of committee on 6 December 2023, a question was asked regarding the area in square meters and square feet rented to market traders at Birkenhead Market. Due to a conversion error, the wrong square metreage was supplied, the Chair offered his apologies to the questioner for this error and gave the correct figures as follows:

There was a total of 1,676 metres squared or 18,047 square feet by all tenants. This was split into 1,480 metres squared / 15,934 square feet indoors and 196 metres squared / 2,113 square feet outdoors.

Freya Levy was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read her question on her behalf, She asked whether the Council would consider facilitating plans for co-housing schemes in Birkenhead if they were not already doing so.

The Chair responded that a blended and inclusive approach was extremely important to the Council's regeneration and place making agenda and that initiatives such as co-housing would be considered as part of this.

Mr Alan Featherstone asked what rentable stall area were officers projecting would be provided to Birkenhead Market traders.

The Chair responded that the work that was approved in December 2023 by the committee would, as an outcome, confirm the total space that would be available to traders.

Mr Featherstone had a supplementary question asking whether the Marks and Spencer site would now be included in the high level studies for an alternative market site.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Mr Alan Featherstone asked the Chair if he was content with the accuracy of the information provided by the committee.

The Chair responded that, by and large, he was happy with the accuracy of the information provided to committee. He acknowledged the error in conversion from square feet to square metreage at the previous committee and noted that the correct information had now been given.

Mr Featherstone had a supplementary question, asking if the Chair was happy with the current plans for a 60% reduction and eviction of current market traders by way of stolen metreage with all the current plans.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Mr Dave Borrill was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked how and when a third consultation team would be consulting with traders.

The Chair responded that officers were meeting with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association later in the week that this committee was held on and would go over key details and next steps.

Mike Eccles was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked how the committee intended to ensure transparent and meaningful participation took place with members of the market community before any crucial decisions were made.

The Chair responded that this would be discussed at the meeting with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association later in the week and the outcomes of the discussion would be fed back to their members.

Joe Orr noted that he had asked a question at the previous committee regarding the status of surveys aimed at gathering insights on the preferences of the local community regarding the market and asked if those surveys had been conducted.

The Chair responded that the work was ongoing as part of the approvals made at the previous meeting of the committee in December 2023.

Joe Orr asked whether the committee could outline specific lessons learned from comparable successful market preservation projects elsewhere and how Members intended to apply those lessons to Birkenhead Market.

The Chair responded that officers had undertaken visits to successful markets such as Warrington and had wider visits planned to markets such as Sheffield and Barnsley and had appointed a markets curator that had successfully consulted and delivered on over 200 markets. He noted that this appointment provided invaluable experience.

Mr Orr had a supplementary question regarding Chester Market traders receiving a reduction in rent and asked if a similar package could be offered to help Birkenhead Market traders.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Gregg McTigue was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked if the Council could make a commitment to the marker traders that they would be offered viable stalls at the new market.

The Chair responded that work was being undertaken by the councils' design team and market curator which would review trader requirements and feed into the business case.

Kim Roberts was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on her behalf. She asked whether the council could offer support to the market traders such as advertising or financial support.

The Chair responded noted that officers had met with market traders prior and following the meeting of the committee in December 2023. He responded that the market currently made a loss of income that the council had been underpinning and were not currently in a position to offer packages of support.

Tommy Roberts was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked what the plan for the market was moving forward, including when consultation would take place, what the budget was and what the timeline would be.

The Chair responded that officers were meeting with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association later in the week and would provide updates at that meeting including updates and next steps.

59.2 Statements and Petitions

The Chair noted that no statements had been received.

Mr Joe Orr presented a petition on behalf of the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association signed by 1,586 people online, with a further 173 hand-written signatures. He stated that the petition was a collective plea from the local community to be provided with a new flagship market in Birkenhead. He asked Members of the committee to consider the petition as a powerful endorsement for change and support for a market that stood as a symbol of progress and pride.

59.3 Questions by Members

The Chair noted that no such questions had been received.

60 WIRRAL WATERS INVESTMENT FUND – EGERTON VILLAGE

The Head of Regeneration Delivery presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report sought approval to enter into a Deed of Novation of Contract in respect of the Wirral Waters Investment Fund Grant Funding Agreement dated 23 February 2023, to enable the delivery of Egerton Village, a new high quality mixed-use development to come forward within Wirral Waters.

The report stated that the recommendations would also enable Starship Regeneration Egerton Village Limited to progress the development which would

support the priorities of the Wirral Waters Investment Fund, Birkenhead 2040 Framework, and the Council Plan.

Members stated their enthusiasm for the project and sought assurances on the financial security of the agreement. It was noted that while no absolute guarantees could be offered, officers were confident in the agreements and contractual obligations of Peel L&P to complete the project should Starship not be able to deliver.

It was proposed by Cllr Jo Bird that the recommendation in the report be amended to include the words “in consultation with the Director of Finance” after the first line: “That the Director of Regeneration and Place”. This was agreed by the Head of Regeneration Delivery as an amended officer recommendation.

On a Motion proposed by Councillor Andrew Hodson and seconded by Councillor George Davie, it was:

Resolved - That the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Finance be authorised to approve the novation of the Grant Funding Agreement between the Council and Peel L&P Investments and Property Limited for the Egerton Village project to Starship Regeneration Egerton Village Limited with Peel L&P Holdings (UK) Ltd acting as continuing Guarantor subject to the requirements as summarised in paragraph 5.1 of this report being satisfied.

61 **UTILISATION OF PROCURE PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK - BIRKENHEAD WATERFRONT PROGRAMME, CONWAY STREET / EUROPA BOULEVARD AND GRANGE ROAD / CHARING CROSS / GRANGE ROAD WEST MOVEMENT PROJECTS**

The Head of Regeneration Delivery presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report sought members’ endorsement of the commencement of a procurement exercise via the Procure Partnerships Framework and the Pagabo Framework (or other suitable framework) to allow for the direct appointment of two separate main Tier 1 contractors that would lead to two direct awards, one to develop the design and undertake the construction works in relation to the highways, public realm and active travel schemes across the Birkenhead Waterfront Programme and the second award to immediately in early 2024 commence the construction works in Birkenhead Town Centre in relation to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Project and Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West Movement Project.

The report noted that the Birkenhead Waterfront and Central Birkenhead (Town Centre) Programmes have been awarded significant funding from the Levelling Up Fund, Future High Streets Fund, Active Travel Tranche 3 and Town Deal. All the Programmes were time limited. These time related pressures were exacerbated by the current high levels of inflation in construction costs and the

availability of suitable contractors in a very competitive marketplace due to similar funding awards in many other authorities. Choice of the recommended procurement route and the use of suitably qualified and experienced main contractors would bring significant benefits and efficiencies to the process, would greatly aid project certainty, ensuring that funding deadlines were met, and the Programmes were delivered as efficiently as possible.

Members discussed their concerns that it had taken so long to get to this point but were happy to see progress. They noted that it was important that with two different contractors working on these projects that the street scene was kept consistent with the same quality work undertaken across all areas of work.

Resolved -

- 1. That the commencement of a procurement exercise(s) via the Procure Partnerships Framework and the Pagabo Framework (or other suitable alternative procurement framework) be approved to allow for the direct appointment of two separate main Tier 1 contractors that will lead to two direct awards of construction contracts to develop the design and to undertake the construction works in relation to the highways, public realm and active travel schemes across the Birkenhead Waterfront Programme and to undertake construction works in Birkenhead Town Centre in relation to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West Movement Projects.**
- 2. That the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to make direct appointments in relation to the above procurement exercises including in due course via the Pagabo framework for the Birkenhead Waterfront Programme, (where the design needs to be developed through an initial pre-construction services agreement with the contractor prior to the main construction contract) for the contracts referred to in recommendation (1) upon receipt of suitable bids from the relevant contractors; and**
- 3. That the above recommendations be deemed urgent and therefore not subject to the procedure for re consideration.**

62 BIRKENHEAD HEAT NETWORK

The Director of Finance presented his report which summarised the findings of the Detailed Project Development Study and Outline Business Case for Birkenhead Heat Network.

The report noted that the potential development of a Green Heat Network in Birkenhead would deliver against key priorities for the Council around both carbon reduction and regeneration. Wirral's Cool 2 Climate Change Strategy 2019 included an objective to generate and/or source all the Council's local

energy needs from zero carbon and renewable sources by around 2041 and commitment to progress heat networks. Provision had been made within the draft Local Plan to support a heat network through making provision for an energy centre and mandating suitable buildings to connect to a heat network. Birkenhead Heat Network was listed as one of eight catalyst projects in the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework.

Members were universally excited by the project and wanted to know what timescales were expected. They were informed that the project was at too early a stage to give timelines but that further reports would be delivered in future.

Resolved – That:

- 1. The work to date on the development of the Birkenhead Heat Network be noted;**
- 2. The grant funding received to date to support this work be noted;**
- 3. The application to the Green Heat Network Fund be endorsed; and**
- 4. The proposed project review around commercialisation options be endorsed.**

63 **2024-25 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE**

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented the report of the Director of Finance. The report gave an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings that were being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The report noted that the Council had a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget, which sets out how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. The report highlighted the external challenges impacting the 2024/25 budget setting process and proposed options to address the challenges faced.

Members queried the figures on the budget pressures relating to the Birkenhead Commercial District and whether tenants had been secured for the new office buildings. The Director of Regeneration and Place explained that the budget pressure figure of £2 million was not for void periods and was being utilised for a range of issues relating to the completion of the buildings. He noted that marketing had begun for the office buildings and was going well, he stated that a report updating Members would be brought to committee in due course.

Resolved – That

- 1. The indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 be noted; and**

- 2. The Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in Appendix 3 be agreed.**

64 WORK PROGRAMME

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance. Members were informed that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Members queried when the Project Delivery Plan would be available for Members to view. It was noted that the Project Delivery Plan was not yet ready and would be added to the Work Programme when it was close to completion. Members noted that the Masterplan and Neighbourhood Framework item was listed in both the key and non-key decision tables. The Lead Principal Lawyer noted that this was an error and stated that this would be corrected.

Resolved – That the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be agreed.

65 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the following appendices be deemed to be exempt from publication on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

Wirral Waters Investment Fund – Egerton Village – Exempt Appendices 2 and 3;

Utilisation of Procure Partnerships Framework – Birkenhead Waterfront Programme, Conway Street / Europa Boulevard and Grange Road / Charing Cross / Grange Road West Movement Projects – Exempt Appendix 4; and

Birkenhead Heat Network - Exempt Appendix 1.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors P Gilchrist B Hall
S Mountney J McManus
A Onwuemene M Jordan
T Murphy C Baldwin
K Murphy M Skillicorn

61 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast. A minutes silence was held in memory of Carol Jones who was the Carers lead at Wirral Council for twenty four years.

62 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

The Chair proposed moving Item 10 (Maternity) to be heard first and Item 12 (Wirral Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board Update Report) to be heard second. This was agreed. The minutes are in the order of the agenda.

63 MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. Cllr Kieran Murphy declared a pecuniary interest in item 8.

64 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

65 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions, statements or petitions to report.

66 COMMUNITY CONNECTOR COMMISSION

The Senior Public Health Manager presented the report of the Director of Public Health which sought agreement from the Committee to progress proposed commissioning intentions for Community Connector Service, Connect Us, and set out the requirement for the current Community Connector service to be recommissioned from February 2025. The service was experiencing increased demand, and supported residents and communities with a wide range of

complex issues which followed the pandemic and also in response to the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Members requested further information around outcomes and it was agreed that this would be provided.

Members discussed the work of the Community Connectors. It was agreed that information was to be given to Members about the future programme of work that the Community Connectors were working on. It was noted that the original programme of work was in East Wirral and not as much work had been done in West Wirral and this was to be looked at. Further work was agreed in rural areas around isolation as well as isolation in relation to mental health.

Resolved that:

1. The Director of Public Health be authorised to re-commission the Community Connector service totalling up to £4,308,654 (£718,109 per annum) or a four-year contract (1st February 2025 – 31st January 2029) with the option of a one year plus further one year extension.

2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Public Health to award the tender to the successful bidder following the tender process

67 **OUTCOME OF DIRECT PAYMENTS REVIEW**

The Head of Integrated Services presented the report of the Director of Care and Health which recommended and described a more ambitious and longer-term service model that would be better able to achieve the strategic aims of the Council, value for money targets and a more comprehensive offer for potential and current Direct Payment recipients to support the sustainability of the arrangements.

A procurement exercise was undertaken for a PA register which received a low response rate, possibly due to being a short-term one year pilot. It was proposed to undertake a further procurement exercise for a merged Direct Payment (DP) offer for a three year plus one contract to include a payroll and managed accounts service and information and guidance to support DP recipients.

Members asked whether any other options to DP being made by pre-payment cards had been considered as pre-payment cards may take choice away from people. No other options had been considered but it was something that could be considered as the specification was improved. If cash was used people were required to provide accounts and there was not any evidence that DP reduces what the money can be spent on so there should be no problem in terms of choice and control.

Members asked about age limits and were informed that there was no age limit to those in receipt of DP.

Members were informed that people would be given training and support with the financial side of DP if they wished or alternatively the financial side could be completed for them.

Resolved that:

(1) The proposed service model and outcomes as described in section 3.1 to 3.6 of this report be endorsed

(2) (a) The Director of Care and Health be authorised to commence a procurement process for the appointment of an accredited provider for a merged offer to include a payroll and managed accounts service, information advice and guidance for current and potential Direct Payment recipients and a Personal Assistant register for a three-year contract with an option for a further one-year extension; and

(b) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Care and Health to award the contract to the successful bidder following the tender process.

(3) The Director of Care and Health be requested to bring a further report to a future Committee to inform Members of the outcomes achieved once the new service model is established.

68 **AWARD OF CONTRACT AND EXTENSION OF BUDGET TO RECOMMISSION WIRRAL INDEPENDENCE SERVICE (COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT AND TELECARE)**

Cllr Kieran Murphy had a pecuniary interest in this item and left the meeting.

The Assistant Director, Integrated Services & Commissioning presented the report of the Director of Care and Health which requested approval to award a contract for the provision of the Wirral Independence Service (WIS), at an increased budget cost of £4.9m from £4.2M per year. The commencement of the procurement process at an original budget cost of £4.2M was approved by this Committee in June 2023. The current contract ends in June 2024 and there were no further contract extensions available. The WIS included the provision of community equipment, technology enabled care and response service, carers emergency card, falls pick-up / responder service, falls prevention service, provision of paediatric equipment and education equipment for schools.

Members were reassured that there was an amnesty in place for the return of equipment.

Resolved that:

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee approve the award of a 5-year contract (with options for a 3 year, plus a 2-year contract extension) for the provision of the Wirral Independence Service (Community Equipment and Telecare) with a total contract value of £4.9m annually, up to £51m over 10 years to Medequip Assistive Technology Ltd as the highest scoring tenderer in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria.

69 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH 2024-25 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT**

The Director of Adults, Health & Strategic Commissioning Services introduced the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings that are being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The report also summarised the outcomes of the recent Budget Workshops between Members and senior officers, which had enabled officer and Member liaison on proposed budget options, facilitated discussion and allowed direction to be obtained on further analysis required and provided an opportunity for alternative proposals to be considered.

Members requested further detail on Shared Lives.

The Social Care precept was also discussed by Members and it was noted that this had been taken into account in the figures in the report. If the precept was not applied the money available for Adult Social Care would be reduced by in excess of £2million.

It was explained to Members that Local Authorities would be expected to absorb any Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment costs within their settlements. No additional funding had been made available to cover assessment costs.

Resolved – That

1. The indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 be noted.

2. The Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in Appendix 3 be agreed.

70 **MATERNITY AND NEONATAL QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Divisional Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Women's and Childrens division, Wirral University Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH) presented the report which provided an update and oversight of the quality and safety of maternity services at WUTH. The report provided a specific update regarding Year 5 of the Maternity Incentive Scheme (MIS). There was also an update on progress on the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle. The report also highlighted the outcome of the recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of the maternity services provided by WUTH.

Assurance was given that the three year delivery plan was on target to meet requirements.

It was noted that maternity was very much in the limelight due to Ockenden 1 and 2 following from the Shrewsbury and Telford enquiry. It was stated that reports were consistently made to the Board of Directors and within the Trust full compliance on that was reviewed quarterly and all immediate actions were maintained to do that.

Members queried whether there were any areas for improvement and the CQC had identified three specific areas which were actioned whilst the CQC was either on site or within two weeks. These were around maternity triage and telephone services and baby abduction. There was an additional measure

recommended to the full lockdown secure system which was added to some lockable doors and also a stable resus platform in the Seacombe Birth Centre.

Members queried the removal of the maternity shop from the precinct. It was explained that it had been difficult to meet the IPC infection control requirements. Alternative sites were being proactively sought across the Wirral and community hubs were being looked at. It was reported that a site had been secured in Birkenhead.

Members asked how many births had taken place in Seacombe Birthing Centre as opposed to home births. It was explained that the centre was pioneered in 2019 to deliver community home births of on average around a hundred per year within the team and 14-16 births were in the centre.

Members questioned how sure we could be that the neonatal services would remain on the Wirral. It was reported that neonatal services had been subject to an ongoing review by NHS England for at least five years and the outcome was still awaited.

Members queried recruitment and retention of midwives and it was reported that in 2021 there was funding for clinical recruitment and retention of midwives which included supporting newly qualified midwives to support retention. A six monthly report went to the Board and Members were reassured that the vacancy rate sat at 2 percent which had enabled WUTH to progress with continuity of care.

Members asked about the feedback mechanism and this was clarified as the national family and friends feed back tool, cards and user platforms which were taken very seriously and shared widely and goes to the Board. The CQC feedback had highlighted a couple of areas including knowing what a lady's history was and the role out of continuity of care would support that. It was reported that negative feedback was very rarely received which was mainly around the post natal area and pain management.

Members were proud of the maternity services on Wirral and thanked WUTH.

Resolved – That the updates within the report and progress by Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH) on the delivery of safe maternity services be noted.

71 **END OF LIFE CARE BEST PRACTICE**

The Associate Director for NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and the Assistant Director of Commissioning and Integrated Service presented the report of the Director of Care and Health which provided an update on Palliative and End of Life Care Services provided in Wirral. The report included services commissioned by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), Wirral Place and also activities undertaken by commissioned Adult Social Care providers in Wirral.

Members discussed their experience of end of life care and that the key to end of life care was communication. Members asked about the provision made for people to have their end of life care in their own home and this was explained.

Members noted that the distinction between end of life care and palliative care needs to be made. It was explained that there is a difference between palliative care with symptom management which can take a year to 18 months or more and end of life care that can be 6 weeks or less.

It was reported that people eligible for the continuing health care fast track had been identified for end of life care within three months and of those, between fifty to sixty percent of people on that pathway died within three months.

Resolved – That the content of the report, and the Health and Care system work underway to support End of Life Care in Wirral be noted.

72 **WIRRAL SAFEGUARDING ADULTS PARTNERSHIP BOARD UPDATE REPORT**

The Independent Chair of the Wirral Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board presented the report of the Director of Care and Health which provided a further update on the work of the Wirral Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (WSAPB) and presented the WSAPB 2021-2023 Annual report. The Care Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board in its area.

The Wirral Safeguarding Adults Board was comprised of senior leaders across health and social care who commission or deliver services for people in need of help and support who can make decisions about budgets and changes to policies and procedures. Senior leaders from the Hospital Trusts, the Mental Health Trusts, fire, police, probation as well as health and social care services, Healthwatch and Chief Executive of Age Concern who worked with the other voluntary sectors had come together on the Board.

Safeguarding spotlight sessions were offered by the Board and a session was offered.

Members asked how far the Board had got in terms of implementation of the plan. It was clarified that the report contained a table that showed a RAG rating of all the actions. A couple of actions were yellow and still in progress. One of the reds was about obtaining data from colleagues staff training and referrals and the Board were taking that forward. The Board were quite ahead with the forward plan and knew what needed to be done about the areas in yellow.

Members questioned what awareness raising was being done in terms of neglect and whether that included self neglect. It was highlighted that neglect was one of the biggest areas of abuse and the Board had completed a piece of work with Liverpool John Moores University on neglect, self neglect and hoarding behaviours and guidance has been sent to staff across the partnership.

In addition, Members questioned the target for the delivery of the knowledge and skills area which was one of the biggest areas to develop. The report was up to March 2022.

Members asked how the Board can bring an extra level of assurance that existing organisations could not supply. It was explained that the Board brought a multiagency approach and brought together composite reports in one place to see how they link in and work together.

It was agreed by Members that a spotlight session on a subject to be decided by Committee would add value and an update report from WSAPB was offered.

Resolved – That the update report in relation to the work of the Wirral Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board and the 2021 – 2023 Annual report spanning the first 18 months of the Board be noted.

73 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Head of Legal introduced the report which presented the future work programme of the Committee.

Additional items were suggested including:

- A spotlight session from the Wirral Safeguarding Adults Board on a topic to be decided by Committee.
- An item around Shared Lives.
- Quality Accounts for WUTH and CCC as a scrutiny item.
- An update report from CWP over the availability of community psychiatric nurses when the changes have bedded in after May.
- An update report from WSAPB.

Resolved - That, subject to the changes noted above, the proposed Adult Social Care and Public Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be noted.

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TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 January 2024

Present: Councillor H Cameron (Chair)

Councillors	P Martin	G Bennett
	P Jobson	J Johnson
	T Laing	C McDonald
	G McManus	R Molyneux
	K Stuart	M Redfern

56 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

57 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

58 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest. No interests were declared.

59 MINUTES

Resolved – That, subject to Minute 52 paragraph 2 saying ‘could’ not ‘would’, the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

60 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no questions, statements or petitions received.

61 TCCL BUDGET REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhood presented the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings that are being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. It was also for the

Committee to consider feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops which had been held. The Policy and Service Committees are responsible for those services being delivered under their operational headings within their annual budget envelope. The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, has been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council. The Council was required to set a balanced budget each year and set a Medium-Term Financial Plan which considers the future pressures and savings options that will be taken forward to result in a balanced budget position. The Council faces a challenging financial outlook due to inflationary and demand pressures alongside the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements. It was noted that there were apparent pressures caused by achievement against targets for some areas of work but the targets themselves have been reconsidered ready for future budget proposals.

Members debated the implications of the proposals.

Resolved - That:

- 1. the indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 be noted; and**
- 2. the Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in exempt Appendix 3 be agreed.**

62 **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

The Assistant Director for Leisure, Libraries and Engage introduced with the Senior Manager, Engagement, the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods which detailed the progress in the implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy.

Various graphs and narratives were presented which Members discussed and sought further detail on issues such as call waiting lengths, accessibility for people without digital access or who had alternative language needs, and the terminology.

Resolved - That the progress made in delivering the Customer Experience Strategy be noted.

63 **TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Safety and Transport presented the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided performance information in relation to Community Safety, encompassing Community Safety delivered by the Council and partner organisations in Wirral. It was noted that

the overall performance was good and indicator arrows had been used to show progress. There had been a spike in acquisitive crimes and the Police had put a team in place to tackle that, such as encouraging locking vehicles as 40% of thefts from vehicles was from unlocked vehicles, and working with pawn brokers over stolen goods.

Members debated the format and scope of the statistics and the responses to identified issues such as the lack of identification of locations in reports. Officers noted the suggestions and queries.

Resolved – That the content of the report be noted.

64 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Consultant Lawyer introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance Committee which presented the Work Programme for the Committee.

Members suggested additions including:

- A workshop on Community Asset Transfers
- An item on communication including consultation bias, social media, listening as well as broadcasting and audiences, as engagement was in the Committee's Terms of Reference

Resolved – that, subject to the addition of the items noted at the meeting, the work programme be noted.

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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 29 January 2024

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors	S Foulkes	M Booth
	A Ainsworth	G Davies
	P Jobson	N Graham
	V Wilson	A Brame
	G Jenkinson (In Place of Cllr J Walsh)	M Sullivan

61 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

62 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jason Walsh. Councillor Gail Jenkinson was in attendance as substitute.

63 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. There were no declarations of interests.

64 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

65 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

65.1 Public Questions

The Chair reported that 5 public questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

Paul Carr asked a question regarding the environmental benefits of plant-based diets in comparison to the impacts of meat and dairy production. Mr Carr asked if Wirral Council could follow several UK Councils in endorsing the

Plant Based treaty which called for a global treaty to address food emissions alongside local implementation of plant-based initiatives in catering, training and public awareness campaigns.

In response, the Chair stated that they personally would like to see the Council endorse the plant-based treaty. The Chair also reported that Wirral Council, as a partner of Cool Wirral, were engaging the public on various issues to reduce carbon emissions, including advice on how to reduce the carbon footprint of food. It was noted that engagement events in food growing and composting were being advertised for residents. In addition, it was reported that the Council produced sustainable event guidance to encourage plant-based options for partners using Council facilities and that the Climate Emergency team would explore further what the Plant Based Treaty entailed.

Charlotte Smith asked a question regarding comments made by the Chair when asking a public question at Policy & Resources Committee in December 2023, whereby the Chair described land at Arrowe Park Road as a valued amenity space. Ms Smith asked if the Chair agreed that the residents of Hoylake considered Hoylake beach a much loved amenity space and if she would support the restoration of an amenity beach between King's Gap and New Lifeboat Station. Ms Smith highlighted public health and safety risks, operational safety concerns of the local RNLI and concerns over breaching the Equality Act 2010.

In response, the Chair agreed that Hoylake beach was a much loved community space and that the Council's extensive consultation highlighted that residents understood amenity value in different ways with a number of different views on future beach management options. The Chair stated that the Council had not breached the Equality Act or put the operational safety of the RNLI at risk.

Charlotte Smith asked a supplementary question relating to health and safety concerns on the beach and whether a risk assessment had been considered in relation to the condition of the beach.

In response the Chair affirmed that a risk assessment was undertaken when the decision was made to stop raking the beach and that risk assessments would be undertaken for any future beach management options.

Wendy Bennett asked, since the decision to stop clearing Hoylake beach in 2019, how much the Council had spent on all matters relevant to the beach, including sand removal, legal and professional advice, public consultation and administration costs including the costs of any dedicated teams working on the future management options for the beach.

In response, the Chair indicated that an answer to that question would require some time to collate the relevant information and that a written response would be provided.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Frank McArdle which related to previous mass gatherings on Hoylake beach and asked that the rules and regulations for mass gatherings on the beach to adhere to Council and Natural England requirements could be clarified.

In response, the Chair set out the requirements for members of the public and organisations wishing to organise events on Council land. It was reported that event organisers are asked to submit a 'notification of event form' through the Council's website and provide a written plan for the event, evidence of public liability insurance and a risk assessment. In relation to events on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) on Council land, it was noted that organisers were required to apply well in advance as the process of seeking assent, if required, could be costly and time consuming. If the event required a Habitats Risk Assessment (HRA), it was reported that the Council would work with organisers to agree payment for the assessment and likely timescales, and once complete would be shared with Natural England for their assent.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Keith Randles relating to the 2016 Council beach management plan, whereby Natural England recommended a 2-rake operation to remove vegetation from Hoylake beach. Mr Randles asked whether the then cabinet member was aware that a chemical free option was available to the Council to continue with their obligation for maintaining Hoylake beach and if so why it was not adopted.

In response, the Chair clarified that there was not any legal obligation for the Council to maintain the beach in order to remove vegetation and that if the Council was to maintain the beach in such a way it must gain assent from Natural England as the beach falls within North Wirral Foreshore SSSI and would therefore be subject to protections under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The Chair clarified that the methods put forward to Natural England in 2016 for assent included both raking and spraying, and that both methods were undertaken until 2019. Glyphosate spraying ceased in 2019 whilst raking took place until concerns over driver and public safety led to it being halted later in 2019, whilst assent expired in March 2021. The Chair also clarified that beaches were not in their portfolio as Cabinet Member when they were last raked and sprayed.

65.2 Statements and petitions

No statements or petitions were received.

65.3 Questions by Members

Councillor Gail Jenkinson asked a member question relating to small business day. In light of the Council subsidising parking for last year's small business

day, Cllr Jenkinson asked whether the Council could petition the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to consider subsidising public transport for small business day in November of this year.

In response, that Chair noted that the waiving of car parking charges for small business day was not a committee decision. Whilst acknowledging that public transport was not in the remit of this committee, the Chair supported the principle that those using public transport should be incentivised to support small businesses and stated that officers had agreed to take this request to the Combined Authority.

66 **HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET MANAGEMENT (HIAM) POLICY AND STRATEGY**

The Assistant Director for Highways & Infrastructure introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which recommended that Committee approved the Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management (HIAM) Policy and Strategy for 2023-27. It was reported that the HIAM Strategy and Policy, originally approved by Committee in December 2020, had been refreshed to align with the priorities of the new Council Plan 2023-27 and in consideration of devolved grant funding through the Liverpool City Region Transport Settlement. It was noted that the Policy and Strategy were high-level, overarching, documents that would form part of a highway asset management framework, and a HIAM Plan with specific operational policies and implementation plans would be presented to a future meeting of the committee, alongside a refreshed performance management framework.

Members discussed procedures relating to highway inspections, including the process for road inspections and the timescales for resolving issues. The Assistant Director reported that recorded ward inspections were undertaken on a cyclical basis, alongside additional inspections arising from the reporting of issues by members and public and councillors, whereby qualified inspectors would undertake dynamic risk assessments when inspecting defects to resolve what action was required with a related prioritisation score.

Members also noted issues relating to deterioration of roads in the network, including increased traffic on minor roads and the impact of different approaches to fixing defects, alongside balancing climate challenges with effective highways management. In response to queries, The Assistant Director indicated that the network was in good condition overall considering funding challenges, and the Council adopted a policy of maximising the lifespan of roads with minimum intervention whereby various surface treatments would be utilised rather than full reconstruction where possible.

Resolved – That

- 1. The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy 2023-27 be approved;**
- 2. The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy 2023-27 be approved; and**
- 3. The Director of Neighbourhoods Services be authorised to make any non-substantive changes revisions or amendments to the documents as are necessary to align with the council's corporate objectives or with legislative changes.**

67 ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY

The Assistant Director – Chief Regeneration Officer presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which detailed the draft 'Places for People' Strategy alongside work undertaken to develop detailed network plans for a proposed Active Travel Infrastructure Plan (ATIP). It was reported that the strategy was a critical step in securing future investment for delivery plans from Government through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and the strategy formed part of the Council's wider transport strategies to achieve the goals of the Local Transport Plan and provide a framework for management of active travel in the context of place-making. Alongside approval of the draft strategy, Committee were recommended to authorise the Director of Regeneration of Place to undertake public and stakeholder engagement to support the development of an ATIP, the outcomes of which were anticipated to be presented to Committee in September 2024.

Members discussed the impact of the strategy on different network users, including the elderly, pedestrians and car users, particularly in light of the hierarchy of users within the revised highway code. The Assistant Director reported that the strategy considered the benefits of walking and cycling alongside consideration of car users by creating spaces for all users to access the network.

In addition, Members discussed existing Active Travel infrastructure in the borough. In response to queries relating to the Fender Lane cycle lane, the Strategic Transport Project Manager confirmed reviews were being undertaken for the Fender Lane and New Chester Road Schemes which included the use of traffic count sensors.

Members also highlighted concerns relating to the national rollout of active travel initiatives and the importance of inclusion of active travel design in securing funding for wider projects. Members also noted the importance of referencing co-design of the network within the strategy, alongside economic and health benefits associated with active travel.

On a motion proposed by Councillor Grey, seconded by Councillor Foulkes, it was:

Resolved (8:3) – That

- 1. The Places for People strategy be approved; and**
- 2. The Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to undertake public and stakeholder consultation to support the development of an Active Travel Infrastructure Plan.**

68 **ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services presented the report which provided a performance update in relation to Environment and Climate Emergency, and Highways and Infrastructure. It was noted that a forthcoming Performance Management Framework workshop had been scheduled with Committee Members to undertake a review on how best to report performance data in future meetings. It was reported that some of the data within the dashboards was incomplete and would be addressed in the forthcoming review.

Members noted the number of requests relating to missed bin collections. The Assistant Director for Climate Emergency and Environment detailed that whilst missed collection service enquiries was a big demand issue for the Council, the performance on all coloured bins remained very consistent with numbers of missed collection per week extremely small overall. The impact of recent service disruption due to unsafe weather conditions and industrial action undertaken in December 2022 on legacy figures was noted.

Members also raised concerns in relation to recycling rates and enforcement of flytipping. It was noted whilst changes in legislation would require systematic changes to how recycling was undertaken, alongside coinciding with the new waste collection contract in 2027, it was important that work was undertaken to promote recycling under existing arrangements including increasing awareness regarding what can be recycled. In addition, it was detailed that a revised enforcement policy would be presented to a future Committee meeting which would have implications for enforcement of flytipping.

In response to queries associated with spend on street lighting columns replacement and upgrades, it was clarified significant funding in the region of £10 million had been spent in recent years on the replacement of lanterns with LEDs and replacement of columns. A residue from that funding remained which was being used to replace columns which were not undertaken in the previous work.

Resolved – That the Performance report be noted.

69 **2024-25 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services presented the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFS). Budget pressures relating to the Committee were outlined, which primarily related to inflationary increases in the Refuse & Street Cleansing contract, the Waste Levy and Transport Levy. It was reported that there were no specific budget savings within the remit of the Committee within the MTFS as savings had been identified for the Neighbourhoods Directorate within the remit of the Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee.

Resolved – That

- 1. The indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 be noted; and**
- 2. The budget workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in appendix 3, be agreed.**

70 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which advised Members that the Committee in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. It was noted that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

Members requested that the issue of gully cleansing be added to the work programme as an issue for consideration. In addition, Members raised the issue of addressing pavement parking which was listed on the work programme. Officers clarified the next iteration of the devolution deal for the Combined Authority would clarify powers available for tackling the issue of pavement parking.

Members asked questions relating to timescales of existing items on the work programme, whilst the Chair detailed that it was approaching 5 years since the Council declared a Climate Emergency, and invited Members and Officers to consider how Committee could reaffirm its commitment to this declaration and mark progress made so far.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

71 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved - That under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

72 2024-25 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE - EXEMPT APPENDIX

Resolved – That the exempt appendix be noted.

REGULATORY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 31 January 2024

Present: Councillor A Hodson (Chair)

Councillors S Bennett K Murphy
C Cooke M Redfern
G Davies K Stuart
B Hall M Sullivan
M Jordan E Tomeny
L Luxon-Kewley T Laing (In place of
C McDonald J Stewart Laing)

32 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast.

33 APOLOGIES

The Chair confirmed apologies for absence had been received from Councillors James Stewart Laing and Richie Pitt.

34 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mike Sullivan declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, as a member of Unite the Union.

35 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 be approved.

36 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that there had been no public questions, statements, petitions or questions by members.

37 WIRRAL AWARD 2023

The Civic and Elections Manager introduced a report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services which sought agreement from the Committee that the Wirral Award be conferred on the nominees as recommended by the Wirral Award Working Party.

The Wirral Award is intended to confer civic recognition upon individuals or organisations resident or located in Wirral for an outstanding achievement within the previous twelve months, or for distinguished service to the Borough over a period of twenty years or more. Members were advised that the nominations were considered annually by a working party of senior Councillors, and the Working Party's recommendations with regard to possible recipients of the Wirral Award.

Resolved – That

(1) the Wirral Award be conferred upon the 11 nominees recommended by the Wirral Award Working Party.

(2) appropriate arrangements be made for the recipients of the Award to be invited to a special ceremony.

With the consent of the Committee, the Chair altered the order of the business

38 **POLLING PLACE REVIEW**

The Civic and Elections Manager introduced a report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services which set out the findings following a review undertaken in respect of the use of a polling station venue in the Moreton West & Saughall Massie Ward, which is currently used as a polling place for the purposes of Local Authority, Parliamentary and other elections. The report detailed a proposal to move the Polling Station from Moreton Community Centre to Moreton Methodist Church.

Resolved – That the relocation of the Polling Station at Moreton Community Centre to Moreton Methodist Church be agreed.

39 **BOROUGH ELECTION FEES & CHARGES**

The Civic and Elections Manager introduced a report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services which detailed the proposed fees to be paid to the Returning Officer and his staff employed to undertake duties at the elections held within the Borough.

Members were advised that the cost of a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Election was met from a Central Government funding grant and the Government would provide a Fees & Charges order that would detail fees to be paid. The cost of the Combined Authority Mayoral (CAM) Elections were met from the funding provided by the Combined Authority, provisional agreement had been provided by the Combined Authority that the fees to be paid would be in line with the PCC Fees & Charges Order.

Resolved – That the decision of the Returning Officer pertaining to the fees as outlined in Appendix 1 be endorsed.

40 REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Licensing Manager introduced a report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services which set out objections received in respect of a proposed increase to the Hackney Carriage Fares as proposed by Unite the Union on behalf of members of the Hackney Carriage trade. Members were reminded that at their meeting on 23 November 2023, they had resolved that the proposed increase to the Hackney Carriage Fares be approved subject to any objections being received as part of the consultation process. It was reported that 9 objections had been received and the Committee was therefore asked to consider the objections and make a determination on whether to implement the proposed increases.

Members discussed the nature of the objections received and the consultation process at length, noting that the legislation required the authority to seek objections only as opposed to general feedback. The Committee was advised that any amendment to the revised table of fares must come into effect no later than 21 February 2024.

It was moved by Councillor Stephen Bennett, seconded by Councillor Tom Laing, that in respect of the proposed fare increases contained in Appendix 2 of the report –

- The Tariff 1 Day Rate remain the same as the current scheme as set out at Appendix 1 of the Report
- Tariff 2 (Night Rate) and Tariff 3 (Public & Bank Holiday) fares be increased in line with the proposal, with the exception that the initial rate be calculated over the first 350 yards as opposed to the proposed 300 yards;
- The tariff 4 (Christmas) fare initial rate be increased in line with the proposal, with the exception that the initial rate be calculated over the first 880 yards as the current scheme;
- Tunnel fees be chargeable but the £5.00 surcharge for journeys to Liverpool be removed

Members debated the proposal where it was outlined that the rationale was to ensure that tariff 1 remained competitive with the availability of public transport in the day and took account of the objections received, whilst still providing a significant increase for tariffs 2 to 4. It was argued that the Committee had heard from representatives of Unite the Union who spoke of the challenges taxi drivers faced and that the Committee should give account of that representation.

After a considerable debate, the motion was put to the vote and carried (10:4).
It was therefore –

Resolved – That in respect of the proposed fare increased contained in Appendix 2 of the report:

- **The Tariff 1 Day Rate remain the same as the current scheme as set out at Appendix 1 of the Report**
- **Tariff 2 (Night Rate) and Tariff 3 (Public & Bank Holiday) fares be increased in line with the proposal, with the exception that the initial rate be calculated over the first 350 yards as opposed to the proposed 300 yards;**
- **The tariff 4 (Christmas) fare initial rate be increased in line with the proposal, with the exception that the initial rate be calculated over the first 880 yards as the current scheme;**
- **Tunnel fees be chargeable but the £5.00 surcharge for journeys to Liverpool be removed**

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1 February 2024

Present: Councillor S Powell-Wilde (Chair)

Councillors	P Basnett	C Povall
	S Bennett	V Wilson
	T Laing	C Cooke
	L Luxon-Kewley	J Grier
	K Hodson	

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast and reminded them that a copy of the webcast would be retained on the Council's website for two years.

2 APOLOGIES

Councillor Chris Carubia sent his apologies

3 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interests in connections with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Paula Basnett and the Chair both declared a personal interest as foster carers.

4 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The Chair noted that no public questions, statements, or petitions had been received.

6 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND COORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES FOR 2025-26

The Senior Manager for Admissions and Place Planning presented a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which invited the

committee to determine the Council's admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated schemes for 2025-2026. The Wirral Fair Access Protocol had also been amended to reflect feedback from Wirral schools.

The report noted that the Council in its capacity as Local Education Authority was required to determine admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools. The Council was also required to have in place a co-ordinated scheme for admissions to all primary and secondary schools including Academy schools, in 2025-26. The Council was required to have in place a Fair Access Protocol agreed with the majority of schools which ensured that there was a fair and balanced approach to admitting unplaced children, particularly those who were most vulnerable, outside the normal admissions round. The Wirral Fair Access Protocol had been developed in partnership with local schools. All admission authority schools must participate in order to ensure that children were allocated a place quickly.

Members discussed the consequences of schools opting out of in-year admissions co-ordination and were informed that they would still have to inform the local authority of all applications they received and their outcomes. They also queried how funding works for children being placed at an oversubscribed school when they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and were informed that once a school has been chosen, funding based on the EHCP needs of the child would be allocated to that school. Members further discussed policy on children returning to school from elective home education and how children might be affected should they transition to another sex while attending a single sex school. They were informed that children returning from home education to a school would go through the same process as any child wishing to transfer in-year from another school. Children going through a transition would be supported and would be able to remain within their current school unless they chose to move.

Resolved – That

1. The admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and the Wirral co-ordinated schemes for 2025-2026 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be agreed.

2. The revised Wirral Fair Access Protocol as set out in Appendix 3 of this report be agreed.

7 2024-25 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE

The Finance Manager presented a report on behalf of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings that were being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The report noted that the Council had a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget, which set out how financial resources were to be allocated and utilised. The report highlighted the

external challenges impacting the 2024/25 budget setting process and proposed options to address the challenges faced.

Resolved – That

- 1. the indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 be noted; and**
- 2. The Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in Appendix 3 be agreed.**

8 HOLIDAY ACTIVITY AND FUND UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Education presented a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which gave an update on the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF). It noted that in 2020 Wirral local authority made the decision for Edsential, a Community Interest Company jointly owned by Wirral and Chester and Cheshire West Councils, to deliver the HAF on behalf of Wirral Council. Holiday Activity funding received by the Local Authority from the Department for Education (DfE) in the last academic year was £1.46 million, this funding had continued this financial year and would continue in 2024-2025. The Edsential team that delivered HAF oversees management, administration marketing, training and finance in relation to the HAF programme, Edsential worked closely with officers within Children's Services to deliver the programme. After each holiday programme Edsential have to complete a finance return to the DfE outlining how the funding had been utilised.

Members queried who was entitled use to the HAF programme and whether children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were given priority. Officers clarified that the HAF programme was specifically for families that could not afford school meals and qualified for free school meals during term time. They highlighted that there were separate respite programmes for SEND children and that work was being carried out to improve this offer.

Members queried whether food or activity was given greater priority within the programme and that some of the activities such as martial arts and boxing sounded potentially dangerous. Officers assured Members that there was no physical fighting and that it was more of an exercise class than combat. There was broad guidance for those clubs taking part and the offer of nutritious food was a key part of the programme.

Members noted that the programme was not a statutory requirement and praised the work done by officers and Edsential. They asked how Members could steer their constituents towards the service. Officers noted that further work was needed to let parents know about the programme.

Resolved – That

- 1. The report be noted; and**

2. the committee supported further developments with Edsential CIC for provision in summer 2024.

9 SCHOOLS STANDARDS

The Assistant Director of Education presented a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which gave information about the provisional pupil outcomes. There was an executive summary followed by a detailed analysis for the pupil outcomes at the age of 5 (Good level of development), age of 6 (Phonics assessment) the age of 7 (Key Stage 1 SATs), the age of 11 (Key Stage 2 SATs) and at the of 16 years old (Key Stage 4 qualifications).

Comparisons had been made with the results nationally wherever possible. For key stage 4 the final statistical release would be at the end of January 2024, any significant changes would be amended and shared with the committee. The report provided a detailed analysis of pupil outcomes and gave a clearer picture a further year on from the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time since 2019 both primary and secondary outcomes would be published nationally.

Members queried how areas services determined where support was needed and asked whether the location of the school attended, or the home address of the child was the determining factor. Officers stated that this was a recent change and was now based on the home address of the child as many children, particularly of secondary school age, travelled outside of their local area to attend selective schools.

Resolved – That

1. The report be noted; and

2. The committee supported the service priorities to support the school improvement strategy based on the outcomes outlined.

10 SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2022-2025

The Assistant Director for Children and Families presented a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education with an updated version of the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025. The Strategy set out the local authority's strategy and plans for developing and supporting the social care workforce over the remainder of its course. It outlined five priorities to attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce which had the skills, knowledge and motivation to improve children's lives. These priorities were:

- Priority 1: 'Growing our own' through recruitment and development
- Priority 2: Support Continuous Professional Development to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention

- Priority 3: Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects ‘high support high challenge’
- Priority 4: Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families
- Priority 5: Communication and change management

Underpinning those priorities was a commitment to developing a healthy working environment that supported a positive emotional health and wellbeing amongst the Council workforce and enabled Wirral Council to be an employer of choice in children’s social care services.

The Assistant Director for Children and Families provided Members with a simplified data set from that in the report, this data showed the number of starters, leavers and the net change in staff numbers of the past three years for Advanced Practitioners, Social Workers and Assessed and Supported Year in Employment staff.

Members discussed the need for more foster carers across Wirral. Officers noted that it had been a constant challenge to recruit and retain foster carers but that this had improved and work was still underway to improve this further.

Members discussed the Yonder programme and the advantages it would offer to both the authority and agency social workers as a not-for-profit recruitment agency. The Director of Children, Families and Education suggested inviting Yonder to speak to Members directly.

Members raised the environmental impact of social work as there was still a requirement for face to face visits that necessitated travel. Officers noted that face to face visits were always likely to be needed but that there had been an increase in on-line meetings for those that were happy to meet in this way which would decrease the environmental impact of meetings.

Resolved – That

1. The progress made to date on the Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025 be endorsed; and

2. A further update on progress at a future date be agreed.

11 EARLY YEARS FUNDING EXPANSION

The Interim Operations Manager: Early Years presented a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which noted that the changes to Early Years Funding Entitlements posed a significant change for families across Wirral as well as the landscape for early years childcare and education. Two-year funding take up had increased from 87% in summer term 2023 to 96% in Autumn 2023, back to pre-covid levels. The 9% points increase was down to a number of factors, the Family Hubs and Children’s Centre continued to assertively target eligible families and promoted the entitlement whenever

possible both to families and professionals. The eligible population had decreased across all wards in Wirral, coupled with Department for Education (DfE) supplying phone numbers for families had made it easier to promote the offer. The media coverage of the new working family's entitlements had possibly helped parents feel more comfortable with sending their young children into early years provision. Three-year funding remained unchanged from summer term at 95% take up.

Members thanked officers for the report. They discussed the difficulties that local authorities faced in recruiting in the early years sector and the need for such recruitment as free childcare was to be provided across the country to children as young as nine months. Officers noted that recruitment was a challenge nationally and that Wirral was involved in a number of initiatives with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Department for Education to increase the number of staff.

Members expressed their approval for schools caring for 2 year olds and felt that it would help develop social bonds and that providing care for children 9 months up would be of great social and economic benefit to the borough.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

12 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which reminded members that the Children, Young People and Housing Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were the remit of the Committee.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

13 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved - That under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the following appendix be deemed to be exempt from publication on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12a (as amended) to that Act.

2024-25 Budget Report Update – Exempt Appendix 3

Resolved – That the exempt appendix be noted.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 8 February 2024

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Kelly (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Foulkes H Gorman K Hodson C Baldwin M Booth	B Kenny J Stewart Laing G McManus S Powell-Wilde J Walsh

56 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members of the Planning Committee, Officers, members of the public and those watching the webcast to the meeting.

57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

58 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023 be approved.

59 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item on the agenda and if so, to declare them and state what they were.

No declarations were made.

60 APP/23/00551; THE GRANGE, GRANGE ROAD, WEST KIRBY, WIRRAL, CH48 4EE, DEMOLITION OF HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS TO PROVIDE 12 APARTMENTS TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING, ACCESS AND LANDSCAPING AND WORKS INCLUDING THE RELOCATION OF THE SUBSTATION.

The Development Management Manager presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place in relation to the above application for consideration.

An objector to the application, Mr Holmes addressed the Committee.

Ward Councillor Jeff Green addressed the Committee.

The applicant's agent, Mr Sacarello addressed the committee.

Following an issue identified during Councillor Green's representation, the Development Management Manager clarified that the consultation period in respect

of the above application had erroneously been displayed as still open on the Council website until 17 February 2024 despite ending in December. This was due to an automated system function which amended the date of the consultation when a response from a consultee was recorded. In order to maintain the fairness of the application process, the Lead Principal Lawyer therefore strongly advised that the application should be deferred to a future meeting, as the public had a legitimate expectation that they should be able to make comment on the application up until the date displayed on the website.

On a motion by Councillor Stuart Kelly and seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes it was:

Resolved – That the consideration of the application be deferred to a subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee.

61 **APP/22/00573; FARM, PARK ROAD, MEOLS, CH47 7BE, CONVERSION OF AN EXISTING SINGLE STOREY HAY BARN INTO A 2 BEDROOM DWELLING (RESUBMISSION OF APPLICATION NUMBER 21/01378 REFUSED DATED 15TH OCTOBER 2021)**

The Development Management Manager presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place in relation to the above application for consideration. The Development Management Manager referenced the updated addendum to the report which included an amendment to Condition 2, alongside the inclusion of a further condition (Condition 9).

Ward Councillor Andrew Gardner addressed the committee.

On a motion by Councillor Stuart Kelly and seconded by Councillor Kathy Hodson, it was:

Resolved (10:1) – That the application be approved subject to the following conditions:

1. **The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than [3] years from the date of this decision.**
2. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 05/04/2022 & 16/08/2023 and listed as follows:**
 - **2768.P1**
 - **2768.P1 Rev A**
 - **20 018 05 Rev A**
 - **20 018 06 Rev A**
 - **FRA Rev 4 Base Energy**
 - **Full Structure Report CASE**
3. **No development involving the use of any facing materials and driveway materials shall take place until samples or details of the materials to be used in the construction of external surfaces of the building and hard**

standing have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The driveway shall be laid and completed using the agreed materials prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby approved.

4. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment (ref: March 2022/Flood Risk Assessment Rev4/Base Energy Service Limited) and the following mitigation measures it details:
 - Finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 0.3 metres above existing floor levels.
 - Flood resilient and resistant construction technology to be incorporated into the design and fabric of the building.
 - Residents/occupant to register to receive flood warning information from the Environment Agency.
 - A flood management plan to be prepared and adopted by the resident/ occupant.
 - Incorporation of simple SuDS techniques within the surface water drainage design of the Page 35 development. These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the scheme's timing/ phasing arrangements. The measures detailed above shall be retained and maintained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.
5. No tree felling, scrub clearance, hedgerow removal, vegetation management, ground clearance and/or building works is to take place during the period 1 March to 31 August inclusive. If it is necessary to undertake works during the bird breeding season then all buildings, trees, scrub, hedgerows and vegetation are to be checked first by an appropriately experienced ecologist to ensure no breeding birds are present. If present, details of how they will be protected are required to be submitted for approval.
6. No works are to be carried out within a minimum of 5 metres of the top of the bank to the north of the site due to potential proximity to water vole, details of methods of protection to this zone are to be submitted for approval prior to any ground works.
7. A scheme of landscape proposals including a timetable of works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to first occupation of the proposed development. The scheme shall include (where practical) but not be limited to, species of local provenance and native and non-native flowering perennial species and features such as bat boxes, bird boxes, log piles, bug boxes, solitary bee houses and hedgehog homes to encourage net gains in biodiversity and full plans and specifications for all hard and soft landscape works and indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, including those to be retained. All planting, seeding and/or turfing

comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the building(s) or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and any trees, shrubs, hedges or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of development die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

8. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any subsequent Order or statutory provision revoking or re-enacting the provisions of that order), no development in classes A, B, D, E or F of Part 1 Schedule 2 to that order shall be carried out on the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.
9. No development shall take place until a Foul Drainage Assessment has been submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The septic tank shall be installed in full accordance with the approved Foul Drainage Assessment prior to the occupation of the dwelling hereby approved and shall be retained for use thereafter.

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13 February 2024

Present:

Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors	J Robinson	JE Green
	J Williamson	H Cameron
	P Gilchrist	S Mountney
	EA Grey	L Rennie
	A Davies	P Cleary
	S Powell-Wilde	H Gorman
	T Jones	J Bird

106 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

107 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

108 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. No such interests were declared.

109 MINUTES

The Chair advised Members that a minor correction was required in respect to minute 103 "Capital Monitoring Quarter 3" The resolution did not state that a referral to Council was requested. The minutes should be amended to read,

Recommend to Council – that,

1. the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 in this report be approved.
2. the changes to the programme detailed in section 3.8 be approved.
3. the revised Capital Programme of £97 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of this report be approved.

It was then,

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 be approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the correction outlined by the Chair.

110 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no Public Questions, Statements or Petitions had been received.

111 2024/25 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Director of Finance submitted the report setting out the draft budget for the 2024/25 financial year. The draft budget was based on the extensive work and analysis undertaken by officers and the finance working group and was presented for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee. Members were informed that if approved, the budget and medium term financial strategy would be presented to Council on 26 February 2024.

The report contained several appendices, some of which were required to be published as part of the statutory annual budget process and others that provided the Committee with relevant information relating to short and medium-term budget planning, inclusive of consultation aspects and financial assumptions. It was reported that those assumptions would potentially change and that they would be reported through the Council's governance processes for budget monitoring to the Policy and Service Committees.

The 2024/25 draft budget had been compiled using the figures in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25 as the final settlement was expected to be published after the publication date of the report, in early February 2024. Any material changes to the final settlement that impact on the assumptions included within this report were reported verbally to the Committee at the meeting. The budget proposals had been produced following extensive engagement of the Policy & Resources Committee, Finance sub-working group and other Policy and Service Committees during the last year. This process had identified the need to reflect the Council Plan priorities, particularly the delivery of high quality, efficient, universal services to all residents.

The Chair thanked all Members and officers for their full participation in the budget setting process, which had enabled the Director of Finance to submit the report and recommendations for Members consideration this evening. The Chair explained that he had contacted Group Leaders with a proposed additional recommendation to those published as follows.

“6. Authorise the reinstalment of the one-off Saving of £400k from the temporary closure of Wallasey Town Hall, in full, until April 2025 and add the additional £246k saving this produces to the £1m investment fund for activities linked to visible improvement in services across the borough.”

It was then moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Tony Jones, that the officer recommendations as detailed in the report be approved, subject to the inclusion of the above additional recommendation.

The Political Group Leaders and a number of Members echoed the views expressed by the Leader in respect to the collaborative work undertaken by representatives of all political groups in the budget setting process both via policy and service committee and the finance sub working group.

Councillor Pat Cleary then proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Jo Bird, in respect to recommendation 4 (d) which was to delete the words “finance sub-committee” and replace them with “the relevant Policy and Service Committee”.

The amendment was then put to the vote and lost (3:12).

The original motion was then put, and it was:

Resolved - That,

1. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, following consultation with the Chair and Group Spokespersons of the Policy & Resources Committee, to do anything necessary – including minor financial adjustments – to give effect to the proposals contained in this report and address any funding changes, if any.

2. Note and consider the response to the financial proposals forming a draft budget for the purposes of consultation under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act, set out as below be noted:

Appendix 1 Budget Proposals

Appendix 2 Budget consultation

Appendix 3 Policy & Service Committee budget proposals feedback

Appendix 4 The Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget

Appendix 5 Provisional Council Tax Statutory Calculations

Appendix 6 Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

Appendix 7 Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Appendix 8 Budget proposal changes since November 2023

Appendix 9 Council Tax Base Calculation Process and Associated Background Information.

3. Recommend to Council a Revenue Budget of £399.603m, noting that the Section 151 Officer in liaison with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service may need to make adjustments to the Budget estimates before the preparation of final reports for Full Council on 26 February 2024.

4. Accordingly recommend that Council:

a) Approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out as Appendix 7

b) Approve increases to the Council's fees and charges equal to or above the annual Consumer Price Index reported by the Office for National Statistics in September 2023, unless either of the following conditions apply:

- i. There is a statutory constraint that prevents such an increase,**
- ii. The Council is operating in a market whereby such an increase would result in the Council being uncompetitive.**

c) Approve the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for Business Rates for 2024/25 set out as Appendix 6.

d) Approve the creation of a £1m project fund within the budget for 2024-25 as set out in section 3 and that oversight of the project fund be retained by the Finance Sub-Committee.

e) Approve that Unearmarked Reserves (General Fund Balances) is maintained at a figure not lower than £13.18m for the course of the 2024/25 financial year.

f) Agree the Budget Proposals as set out in Appendix 1 and authorise, in respect of the Budget Proposals, that the Director with portfolio undertake such actions as they consider necessary to implement the agreed Budget and deliver the savings, income and efficiency proposals developed as part of the formulation process and update Committees accordingly.

g) Approve the 2024/25 Schools Budget of £378.552m

5. Recommend (subject to a separate vote at Council) that Council:

a. Sets the Band D Council Tax at £1,888.22 for the Wirral Borough Council element of the Council Tax, representing a general increase of 2.99% and 2.00% ringfenced increase to Adult Social Care, and the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024/25 of £181.3m as detailed in Appendix 5.

- b. Notes that the additional precepts from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority remain in estimated form and delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer to implement any variation to the overall council tax arising from the final notification of the precepts.**
- 6. Authorise the reinstalment of the one-off Saving of £400k from the temporary closure of Wallasey Town Hall, in full, until April 2025 and add the additional £246k saving this produces to the £1m investment fund for activities linked to visible improvement in services across the borough.**

112 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-29

The Director of Finance submitted the report requesting Members to consider the proposed Capital Programme 2024-29 and to recommend it to Council for approval. The report included information regarding the revenue implications of the Programme and an update on the latest forecast for capital receipts. The 2024-29 Capital Programme represented a combination of schemes originally approved as part of the 2023-28 Programme, updated through the Capital Monitoring reports in 2023-24 and new bids for inclusion as detailed in the report.

Resolved – that Council be recommended to approve,

- 1. the new bids as detailed in Appendix B to this report, requiring £3.3 million of funding for inclusion in the Capital Programme.**
- 2. the Capital Programme 2024-29 as detailed in Appendix C to this report.**

113 CAPITAL FINANCING STRATEGY 2024/25

The Director of Finance submitted a report which outlines the Council's treasury management activity which was underpinned by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) 2021 Code of Practice on Treasury Management ("the Code"). It was explained that the code required to approve the annual Capital Financing Strategy. The report further explained how the Council met its legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

Resolved – that Council be recommended to approve,

- 1.the Capital Strategy for 2024/25;**

2. that the associated Prudential Indicators to be adopted, as detailed within this report and

3. the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision policy as set out in Appendix A of this report.

114 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

The Director of Finance presented the Treasury Management report. The report outlined the process for the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and risks associated with those activities. The Council had substantial sums of money both borrowed and invested and was therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. It was explained that the successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk was therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.

Resolved – that Council be recommended to approve,

(1) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/2025.

(2) the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2024/2025.

(3) the Treasury Management Policy Statement

115 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

The Director of Finance presented the report and advised Members that In February 2018, the former Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) published updated 'Guidance on Local Government Investments'.

The previous edition covered only Treasury Management investments. In recent years local authorities have had an increasing focus on commercial activities including but not exclusive to property. Such activity has the potential to bring both increased returns and increased positive and negative risk. The revised Guidance on Local Authority Investments required that a separate Investment Strategy focusing on non-treasury investments is produced and approved annually by Council. This report fulfilled the requirement of the DLUHC to produce an investment strategy that covers non-treasury activities.

Resolved – that Council be recommended to approve the Investment Strategy for 2024/2025 which includes potential investment in the following activity areas:

1. Commercial Property
2. Service Investments: Loans;
3. Service Investment: Shares (non-currently held); and
4. Loan Commitments and Financial Guarantees

116 **2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE (THE PERIOD TO 31 DEC 2023)**

The Director of Finance presented the report, which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 3 (31 December) of 2023/24. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 3, there was a forecast adverse position of £7.97m on Directorate spend which can be largely offset by utilising the contingency budget and expected savings from reduced energy costs. This position is based on activity to date, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

Resolved – that,

1. the Directorate forecast adverse position of £7.97m presented at Quarter 3, largely offset by utilising £5.0m of contingency budgets and £2.2m of expected savings from reduced energy costs be noted.
2. the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 3 be noted.
3. the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 3.
4. Note budget virements detailed within paragraph 3.33 relating to distribution of centrally held pay and business rate budgets be noted.

117 **PROCEDURE FOR BUDGET DECISION MEETING OF COUNCIL**

The Director of Law and Corporate Services presented the report on the assurance process in formulating the draft Council Budget and to recommend to Council a process for adoption at the Budget decision making meeting.

Resolved – that it be recommended to Council be recommended that, or the duration of the extraordinary meeting of 26th February 2024 (Budget Council):

- (a) the procedure attached as Appendix A be followed in respect of the meeting; and

(b) Council Standing Order 15.4 (timing of speeches) be suspended together with such other standing orders as may conflict with the Budget Council procedure or the Mayor's administration of the meeting, in such a manner as the Mayor in his or her absolute discretion dictates, to ensure the objective of Council setting a lawful budget and council tax requirement prevails.

118 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Leader of the Council reported that whilst there was no specific report in respect to the Work Programme this evening, there were a number of items which the Committee discussed during the course of the meeting which he felt warranted further discussion by Members either via a future Committee report or a workshop. He suggested that the following being included in the Work Programme:

- The Freeport and Wirral Waters Investment Fund
- The Criteria and process for making additions to the Capital Programme

Resolved – that the following be included in the Committee Work Programme:

- **The Freeport and Wirral Waters Investment Fund**
- **The Criteria and process for making additions to the Capital Programme**

Council – 18 March 2024

Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 13.1 and are listed in accordance with Standing Order 13.2.

1. Household Support Fund

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia

Council recognises the work undertaken, with all party support, to make the most effective use of The Household Support Fund in Wirral. Reports presented to members of the Health and Wellbeing Board set out the way in which the funding was made available to local groups and organisations.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recognises the work undertaken in Wirral and how groups have been involved as part of its research.

Council notes that continuation of the Household Support Fund was supported by a wide range of organisations including, the Local Government Association and the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA).

Council further notes the speculation and uncertainty over the future of the funding affects the organisations and all of our borough who are receiving support, help and advice.

Council notes the Chair of SIGOMA, Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE has recently written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to explain the impact of ending the Household Support Fund that he described would have disastrous consequences.

Council believes that tackling the impact of poverty, through this scheme and its successors, is essential in order to deal with social isolation, family breakdown and childhood poverty.

Council therefore requests:

1. the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to press for the Household Support Fund to be funded on a permanent basis to deal with the concerns expressed in recent months; and
2. the Director of Public Health, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, to highlight future sources of funding to support Wirral residents who are most in need by working through the relevant committees.

1. <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50109179/Appendix%201%20Household%20Support%20Fund%20Winter%20Allocation.pdf>
 2. <https://www.sigoma.gov.uk/news/2024/sigoma-calls-for-the-continuation-of-the-household-support-fund>
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2. Freedom of the borough request for Mr David Armstrong

Proposed by Councillor Angie Davies
Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

Council acknowledges and honours individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to Wirral and our communities.

David Armstrong, the Council's Deputy Chief Executive is one such person.

With a career that began in 1975 as a teacher, David epitomises the qualities of a dedicated and diligent public servant, consistently placing people at the forefront of his work.

Having been part of Wirral Council since 1990, David has fulfilled various roles over the 34 years, including serving twice as Acting Chief Executive.

He has exhibited a willingness to go above and beyond, leading by example during challenging times and actively supporting the council, its staff, residents, local businesses and community groups.

David's contributions include mentoring staff, recognising exceptional efforts, and providing personal assistance during emergencies, as well as guiding community groups through change and resolving complex issues.

Council expresses our deep appreciation to David for his dedication and commitment to Wirral and the people of Wirral and wishes him well for his well-earned retirement.

Council therefore requests:

That Council agrees to recommend that consideration be given at the next Regulatory and General Purposes Committee to a freedom of the borough request for Mr David Armstrong.

3. Reopen our Post Offices

Proposed by Councillor Jenny Johnson

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council recognises the immense distress, anguish and grievance caused by the Horizon scandal for Post Masters and Post Mistresses, their families, staff and the wider community.

Council believes the stress upon post office employees since the introduction of the Horizon IT system will have contributed to many choosing to leave their roles, accounting for some of the 7,462 branches which closed between 1997 and 2010.

Council notes that since 2010, and in return for its government funding, the Post Office has been required to invest in the network, and maintain around 11,500 branches with no further substantive reductions.

Council therefore expresses its grave concern that post offices in Wirral, including Ford Road (Upton), Saughall Bridge (Moreton) and Grove Road (Wallasey), have been closed, causing hardship and difficulties to residents and local businesses.

Council thanks those who are campaigning for these branches to reopen, including 1,035 residents who have signed a petition for Grove Road Post Office to reopen and the Upton Village Community Group who have written directly to the Post Office.

Council requests the Chief Executive to write expressing these concerns to the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Post Office, and that all Group Leaders similarly write to the Postal Affairs Minister.

Council also notes the request by the Chair of the Audit & Risk Management Committee for the Authority to also consider whether any of the recommendations following the independent Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry can also be applied to processes within the Council, including those from Phase Five of the Inquiry starting in April, regarding internal and external audit, technical competence, stakeholder engagement, oversight and whistleblowing.

4. Immediate bilateral long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza

**Proposed by Councillor Jo Bird
Seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary**

Wirral Council acknowledges:

1. people who live in Wirral have close family members killed, seriously injured or held hostage by Israel's collective punishment of the people of Gaza or by Hamas. For example, Islam Alashi a Wirral resident and Teacher ¹;
2. repeated representations by local trade union branches including Unison and Unite, members of Merseyside Pension Fund and local residents demonstrate that they do not wish their pensions to be invested in companies that facilitate military operations in Gaza²;
3. As of 29 September 2023, Merseyside Pension Fund had over £17 million of investments in the following companies;

Merseyside Pension Fund investments

£ 8,880,605 BAE Systems
£ 2,959,013 Honeywell
£ 2,004,166 Chemring
£ 905,610 General Dynamics
£ 757,459 Textron
£ 628,508 RTX (Raytheon Tech)
£ 292,017 Lockheed Martin
£ 206,876 Teledyne
£ 159,061 Northrop Grumman
£ 122,598 Caterpillar
£ 50,078 L3Harris
£ 44,240 General Electric
£ 18,849 Boeing

Total £17,029,080 in at least 13 companies ³⁴⁵⁶⁷

4. Council tax and business rates paid in Wirral help to fund investments in these companies via Merseyside Pension Fund;
5. over 30,000 men, women and children killed in Gaza and Israel since 7 October 2023 and the widespread condemnation of the organisations that have claimed responsibility⁸;
6. the world's militaries are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions⁹;
7. the United Nations International Court of Justice order on 26 January 2024 stated that Israel must stop killing Palestinians in Gaza¹⁰;
8. United Nations panel of human rights experts on 23 February 2024 stated that arms exports to Israel must stop immediately¹¹; and
9. Local government pension funds and governments in the UK imposed arms and political sanctions against Russia for invading Ukraine¹².

Therefore Wirral Council requests:

1. that Group Leaders write to the Prime Minister calling on him to support an immediate, bilateral, long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza; and
2. the Director of Pensions at Merseyside Pension Fund submit a report to Members of the Pensions Committee as soon as practically possible to:
 - provide details of current investments in companies in the fund and confirmation on whether or not there are any direct links to Israel Defence Force's military campaign in Gaza as per information as sourced in this motion under point 3;
 - outline the engagement history by the fund or its partners with these companies; and
 - explain how the fund's Responsible Investment Policy should be applied to these companies with a view to potential divestment.

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-67457924>

²<https://www.wirralglobe.co.uk/news/23984346.working-group-set-look-wirral-councils-pension-investments/>

³<https://mpfmembers.org.uk/equities>

⁴<http://labournet.net/other/2312/pensions1.html>

⁵https://www.airframer.com/aircraft_detail.html?model=F-35_JSJF#5

⁶<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/2/israel-to-buy-new-fleet-of-f-35-fighter-jets-financed-by-us-aid>

⁷<https://www.politico.eu/article/court-orders-dutch-stop-shipping-f-35-israel-gaza/>

⁸<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

⁹<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03444-7>

¹⁰<https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203447>

¹¹<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/arms-exports-israel-must-stop-immediately-un-experts>

¹²<https://www.cardiffandvalepensionfund.org.uk/2022/03/statement-from-the-wales-pension-partnership-and-the-lgps-in-wales/>

Full Council – Responsibility for Functions

1. Introduction

Full Council is the primary decision-making body of the Council and, as such, is responsible for the exercise of all of the functions that are held by the local authority.

Whilst decisions in relation to these functions could be made by the Council, and indeed some functions can only be carried out by the Full Council, in order to operate more effectively as an organisation, most of the Council's functions are exercised through delegation to a committee, sub-committee or an officer, or to another local authority.

This part of the Constitution contains the remits of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels and also contains the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

2. Council Functions

The Council reserves to itself the following functions (in accordance with the rules and procedures contained in this Constitution):

- (a) All non-delegable functions as defined by the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012 including: -
 - (i) **The Budget** – The approval or adoption of a plan or strategy for the control of the local authority's borrowing, investments or capital expenditure or for determining the authority's minimum revenue provision, which includes the overarching annual:-
 - (1) Capital programme
 - (2) Capital investment strategy
 - (3) Medium term financial plan
 - (4) Treasury management strategy,except for any amendment, modification, variation or revocation which—
 - (aa) is required for giving effect to requirements of the Secretary of State or a Minister of the Crown in relation to a plan or strategy submitted for approval, or to any part submitted; or
 - (bb) is authorised by a determination made by the local authority—
 - in pursuance of arrangements made for the discharge of functions as set out in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of this Constitution (including virements); and
 - at the time when the local authority approves or adopts the plan or strategy, as the case may be.

(ii) **Policy Framework (Required)** – The making or revoking or amending the following policies, plans and strategies required to form a part of the Council’s Policy Framework:

- (1) Annual Library Plan;
- (2) Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy;
- (3) Development Plan Documents;
- (4) Licensing Authority Policy Statement;
- (5) Policies made under the Gambling Act (including any resolution relating to casinos);
- (6) Local Transport Plan;
- (7) Plans and alterations which together comprise the Development Plan;
- (8) Sustainable Community Strategy; and
- (9) Youth Justice Plan;

except for any amendment, modification, variation or revocation which—

- (aa) is required for giving effect to requirements of the Secretary of State or a Minister of the Crown in relation to a plan or strategy submitted for approval, or to any part submitted; or
- (bb) is authorised by a determination made by the local authority—
 - in pursuance of arrangements made for the discharge of functions as set out in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of this Constitution; and
 - at the time when the local authority approves or adopts the plan or strategy, as the case may be.

(iii) Making of a Members Allowance Scheme and amending the same.

(iv) Determination of Mayor’s and Deputy Mayor’s allowances.

(v) Making a request for single member electoral wards to the Local Government Boundary Commission.

(vi) Resolution to change a scheme for elections.

(vii) Making an order giving effect to the recommendations made in a Community Governance Review.

(viii) Conferring voting rights on co-opted members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees (if any).

- (b) **Policy Framework (Choice)** - The making or revoking or amending the following policies, plans and strategies reserved by Council to form a part of the Council's Policy Framework
 - (i) The Council Plan.
- (c) Setting the Council's Council Tax requirement
- (d) Electing the Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- (e) Appointing the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council (Chair and Vice-Chair of Policy & Resources Committee)
- (f) Agreeing or amending the committee structure, the remit/terms of reference of committees, their size and membership
- (g) Confirming the appointment (or dismissal) of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance (Section 151) Officer.
- (h) Confirming the appointment of the Independent Persons.
- (i) Making, amending, revoking, re-enacting or adopting bylaws and promoting or opposing the making of local legislation including bylaws or personal bills.
- (j) Appointment of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.
- (k) Significant changes to the Council's Constitution, including adopting and amending standing orders, Rules of Procedure, Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, Codes and Protocols that make up the Constitution.
- (l) All other matters which by law are reserved to the Council including: -
 - (i) Ombudsman reports where there has been a finding of maladministration with injustice and the report has been rejected
 - (ii) Statutory officer reports of the Monitoring Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Head of Paid Service and External Auditor's public interest reports.
- (m) Conferring the title of Honorary Freeman and Honorary Alderman.
- (n) Approving the Annual Senior Officer Pay Policy Statement.
- (o) Changing the name of the Borough.
- (p) Appointment of representatives of the local authority not otherwise delegated to a Committee.
- (q) Nomination of councillors and other persons to outside bodies
- (r) Consideration of reports from committees or any other body constituted by the Council.

- (s) To receive the minutes of committees and sub-committees acting under delegated powers for question and comment.
- (t) Making recommendations to the Secretary of State on the Borough boundaries, ward boundaries, electoral divisions, ward or polling districts; and
- (u) any other function which must by law be reserved to full Council.

Note

For the avoidance of doubt, the Full Council retains ultimate responsibility for the actions and decisions of all its Committees and also retains the ability to exercise all its powers whether or not they have also been delegated to a Committee or Officer. Full Council shall not, however, exercise a power that has been delegated without first ensuring that such a step is in the best interests of the Council and in accordance with the rules set out in the Articles of this Constitution. The Council's ability to exercise its powers will not override or supersede any decision or action already taken and implemented by a Committee or Officer acting under delegated authority.