



Economy Regeneration & Housing Committee

Date:	Monday, 20 January 2025
Time:	6.00 p.m.
Venue:	Committee Room One, Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Bryn Griffiths
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PLEASE NOTE: Public seating is limited therefore members of the public wishing to attend are asked to register their attendance in advance by emailing committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk. 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](#)

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**
- 2. APOLOGIES**
- 3. 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.

- 4. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 10)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee held on 4th December 2024, attached.

5. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

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

5.1 Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Wednesday 15th January 2025 to the Council's Monitoring Officer via this link: [Public Question Form](#) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10. Questions must be no longer than 100 words in length.

For more information on how your personal information will be used, please see this link: [Document Data Protection Protocol for Public Speakers at Committees | Wirral Council](#)

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

5.2 Statements and Petitions

Notice of representations (statements) and petitions are to be given in writing by 12 noon, Wednesday 15th January 2025 to the Council's Monitoring Officer.

To register your intention to give a statement please do so via this link: [Public Statement Notification](#), and this will be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

Petitions may be presented to the Committee. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding one minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Chair 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. Please give notice of petitions to committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

5.3 Questions by Members

Questions by Members to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders 12.3 to 12.8.

SECTION A - OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

6. HOUSING UPDATE REPORT (Pages 11 - 20)

SECTION B - BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

7. **2025-26 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE (Pages 21 - 30)**
8. **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: 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 paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

9. **2025-26 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE - EXEMPT APPENDICES (Pages 31 - 42)**

SECTION C - WORK PROGRAMME

10. **WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 43 - 50)**

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for this committee can be found at the end of this agenda.

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ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 December 2024

Present:

Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors	GJ Davies	A Gardner
	A Davies	J Bird
	M Skillicorn	E Lamb
	G Wood	E Tomeny
	A Hodson	H Raymond

118 **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.

119 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies had been received.

120 **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 Helen Raymond gave a personal explanation, in respect of Agenda item 7, that she owned three properties in Wirral as a landlord, although none were within the areas covered by the report.

Councillor Jo Bird declared a personal interest, in respect of Agenda item 6, as she lived close to the Woodside Masterplan area being discussed.

Councillor Jo Bird declared a personal interest, in respect of Agenda item 7, as she lived within one of the Selective Licensing areas.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny declared a personal interest, in respect of Agenda item 7, as he lived near one of the Selective Licensing areas.

121 **MINUTES**

The Chair informed the committee of the following corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting:

In Paragraph 4 of Minute 115, the minutes referred to a Policy & Resources Committee held in March 2024, this should have read “22nd March 2023”.

In Paragraph 6 of Minute 115, the minutes referred to the Gateway Authority, this should have read “Freeport Gateway Policy”.

With those corrections accepted, it was:

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

122 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions, statements or petitions from the public or Councillors had been received.

123 ADOPTION OF MASTERPLANS (WOODSIDE AND WALLASEY TOWN HALL QUARTER)

The Chief Regeneration Officer presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. 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 was endorsed by this Committee as the interim Regeneration strategy for Wirral in March 2022. The report set out that delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework would be supported by more detailed Neighbourhood Frameworks and Masterplans setting out the regeneration objectives and strategies for specific areas. Policy WS6.3 of the emerging Local Plan also required Masterplans to be approved for specified areas to ensure that development was coordinated at neighbourhood level and comprehensively planned.

Two of these documents were detailed in the report, both of which were recommended for adoption:

1. Woodside Masterplan; and
2. Wallasey Town Hall Quarter Masterplan

The adopted masterplans would be a material consideration in the consideration of any planning applications submitted within the masterplan boundary. The Masterplans were a dynamic long-term planning document that offered a vision and theoretical layout to ‘guide’ future regeneration and growth within a neighbourhood, making the connection between buildings, social settings, and their surrounding environments.

Members noted that during consultation there had been an objection from United Utilities and asked what changes had been made to the masterplan since it had been consulted on.

The Chief Regeneration Officer responded that although both United Utilities and Historic England had made some objections to the plans, officers had been able to work with them to resolve their concerns without having to make any significant changes to the masterplan.

Members stated that the report described there being an opportunity for Woodside Ferry Terminal to become a major new cultural attraction and asked if there was a strategy or any expressions of interest on this site and sought assurances that there were high ambitions for the masterplan area.

The Chief Regeneration Officer responded that the masterplan was designed to set out the ambition of the site and were not a commitment to specific details at this stage. She described the masterplan as a catalyst to further regeneration in the area with very high ambitions for the regeneration of the site.

Members noted that there were mentions of consultations throughout the report and asked for assurances that the results of the consultations would be listened too and taken note of.

The Director for Regeneration and Place answered that consultations were a legal requirement and that he felt strongly that doing them properly and listening to the views that they brought was important and that this needed to be balanced with the Council's aspirations for regeneration. He noted that the masterplans were a core component of those aspirations.

Members raised that the report mentioned the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) having concerns for aspects of the Woodside Masterplan and asked if those concerns had been dealt with and if they had been spoken to.

The Director for Regeneration and Place noted that the DWP was based in an office within the Woodside Masterplan which was leased through the Government Property Agency. He stated that he was in dialogue with both of these parties to review how the Council could work with them. The Chair also highlighted that the DWP had not asked for any amendments to the current masterplan.

Members raised that the report mentioned that regeneration within the masterplan areas would create the opportunity for biodiversity net gain and asked for assurances that this would be of the minimum 10% for all development, while keeping to 20% net gain for any council owned land.

The Chief Regeneration Officer responded that those biodiversity targets would be dealt with at the planning stage for any redevelopment on these sites. She noted that where those targets might be difficult in some areas, they could be offset in other areas.

Members questioned whether the masterplan reference to “Brownfield first” was an indication of a move from the Local Plan’s “Brownfield only” policy.

The Director for Regeneration and Place noted that they had been used interchangeably but would ensure that future reports matched the wording of the Local Plan.

Members raised an email that they had received from a resident and former employee that raised questions about a boundary change withing the Wallasey Town Hall Quarter Masterplan area and asked officers for an explanation.

The Chief Regeneration Officer reassured Members that any changes to the masterplan boundary had been done legally with all relevant parties consulted and changes agreed with group leaders and the planning inspectors.

Members asked about the progress of Riverside Primary School and the progress made towards a new building. The Chair noted that this was a matter for the Director of Children, Families and Education, and stated that he would request this information from them.

Members asked about the parking provision around the Woodside Masterplan area and noted that additional parking may not be needed if better public transport was offered.

The Chief Regeneration Officer responded that the Masterplan did not offer an operating model and that would be something covered by later phases.

Resolved – That the following Masterplans be adopted as the Council’s approved dynamic long-term planning strategy for the relevant areas:

- 1. The Woodside Masterplan; and**
- 2. The Wallasey Town Hall Quarter Masterplan.**

124 **APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE AND CONSULTATION FOR SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME**

The Assistant Director for Housing and the Housing Investment Team Leader presented the report on behalf of the Director for Regeneration and Place. The report set out a proposal to approve the Business Case for consulting on a further Selective Licensing Scheme in Wirral. Using a robust evidence base for selection, the proposed scheme involved:

1. re-designating two Selective Licensing areas that had been in place since 2020 and were due to end on 30th September 2025;
2. extending the scheme to include two further new areas;
3. re-introducing the scheme into one former area; and
4. re-introducing the scheme into part of one former area.

The six Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) listed below were proposed to be included in a new scheme (referred to as Scheme 5) which would start on 1st October 2025:

- Tranmere Lairds – LSOA Code E01007291 / Wirral 021D (existing area)
- Egremont South – LSOA Code E01007275 / Wirral 005E (existing area)
- Lower Tranmere – LSOA Code E01007293 / Wirral 027C (new area)
- Tranmere North – LSOA Code E01007130 / Wirral 021A (new area)
- Birkenhead Central – LSOA Code E01007128 / Wirral 016C (former area)
- Hamilton Square B – LSOA Code E10034839 / Wirral 016G (part of former area)

Selective Licensing was a scheme to improve private rented sector homes within specific designated neighbourhoods by requiring private landlords to obtain a licence and comply with certain agreed conditions. A Business Case which supported the extension of the scheme and relevant appendices was attached to the report. Members were asked to agree that this evidence was the subject of a 12-week statutory consultation exercise to seek wider views on the proposal.

Members thanked officers for the report and asked whether there had been much opposition to the licensing condition from landlords.

The Housing Investment Team Leader replied that there had been more acceptance from landlords in the most recent round of consultation. He accepted that there would always be some that did oppose it, but that the majority accepted it.

The Assistant Director Housing noted that the report sought approval for new areas that had not previously had a selective licensing scheme and that views would be asked for from everyone, including landlords within these areas.

Members agreed that ensuring tenants had access to quality housing was a huge benefit.

They asked further questions on the effectiveness of the empty property premium that charges owners of properties that have remained empty between 1-5 years a total of 200% of the standard Council Tax charge, 300% for properties that have remained empty for 5-10 years and 400% total payable Council Tax for those empty for more than 10 years.

The Housing Investment Team Leader noted that a lot of work was done to try and reduce the number of empty homes but that the figure was generally stable at around 2,000 each year. He indicated that he would send Members some statistics on how the empty property premium has affected the number of empty homes.

The Assistant Director for Housing added that it can be the case that people do not declare that a property is empty to avoid paying the premium and that through work related to the selective licensing scheme, officers were knocking on doors and were more likely to discover empty properties.

Resolved – that the following be approved:

- 1. the draft proposal for Selective Licensing in the following six areas from 2025 until 2030 based on the robust evidence base:**
 - **Tranmere Lairds – LSOA Code E01007291 / Wirral 021D (existing area);**
 - **Egremont South – LSOA Code E01007275 / Wirral 005E (existing area);**
 - **Lower Tranmere – LSOA Code E01007293 / Wirral 027C (new area);**
 - **Tranmere North – LSOA Code E01007130 / Wirral 021A (new area);**
 - **Birkenhead Central – LSOA Code E01007128 / Wirral 016C (former area);**
 - **Hamilton Square B – LSOA Code E10034839 / Wirral 016G (part of former area);**
- 2. the Business Case set out in Appendix 1 to the report as the basis for the rationale for wider consultation on Selective Licensing;**
- 3. the consultation plan as set out in Appendix 1.3 to the report; and**
- 4. that the Director of Regeneration & Place be authorised to undertake any minor amendments to the Business Case should further evidence be made available which should be included in the consultation.**

125 **2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO**

The Head of Finance – Place presented the report on behalf of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 2 (30 September) of 2024/25. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances. It enabled 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 favourable position of £450k against the £16.194m committee budget, by managing the use of grants and reserves to address the pressures being faced. This position was based on activity to date, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

Members thanked officers for the report and asked about a reported £0.4m shortfall from planning income and whether that was likely to be repeated in the following financial year.

The Head of Finance – Place responded that this related to an income target for the Planning department that had been set too high. She noted that for the 2025-26 financial year the target would be lowered.

The Interim Director for Regeneration and Place clarified that this shortfall was not due to performance issues with the Planning department. It was related to an unrealistic target that had been set by a national context.

Members sought clarity on the aids and adaptations for the disabled facilities grant and what the report meant by describing this grant as having peaked.

The Assistant Director for Housing clarified that demand had not peaked but was still exceptionally high. She noted that cases for children were generally more complex and therefore cost more.

Councillor asked a question about the capitalisation of staff salaries and what it meant.

The Head of Finance – Place responded that it related specifically to staff that were delivering the capital programme, in particular in relation to the Pathfinder programme. She noted that it was currently funded via council borrowing.

Resolved – That

- 1. The Committee forecast of a £450k favourable position against a budget of £16.194m at Quarter 2, managed by utilising grants and earmarked reserves be noted;**
- 2. The progress on delivery of the 2024/25 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted;**
- 3. The forecast level of reserves at Quarter 2 be noted; and**
- 4. The capital position at Quarter 2 be noted.**

126 **COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2024-25 THEME: PEOPLE FOCUSED REGENERATION**

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented a report which provided a quarterly performance report in relation to the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27 for the Theme people focused regeneration. The report provided a focus on updating on measures that had changed in the Quarter 2 period, June to September 2024.

Following the approval of the Council Plan, a performance management framework was developed through working group activity with members from all Policy and Service Committees and Policy and Resources Committee between February and April 2024. A reporting approach was approved providing quarterly reporting on the measures identified in the framework. Each Policy and Service Committee would receive a report related to its key theme, for Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee this was the 'People focused regeneration' theme. In the reporting cycle, once individual Policy and Service Committees had reviewed their key theme reports they would then be referred up to Policy and Resources Committee to provide that committee with one complete performance report for all themes of the Council Plan. The reporting provided the most recent performance for the measures and included performance context and mitigations in place where underperformance was identified.

Resolved – that the report be noted and referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

127 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the report on behalf of the Chair of the Committee. 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.

Resolved - That the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year be agreed.

128 **SIMPLIFICATION PATHFINDER PILOT PROGRAMME - REALLOCATION OF UNSPENT FUNDING**

The Chief Regeneration Officer presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report provided details on the proposed reallocation of unspent funds within the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme, including a proposal for the redevelopment of Woodside Ferry Village.

A total of £3,126,821 was available for reallocation, due to Transport Shed (£1,394,321) and Sustainability Central (£1,732,500) projects no longer progressing. Reallocation of funding was essential to ensure that the grant was fully spent before the deadline of March 2026. If funding was not spent, it would be returned to government. The funding could not be used for new projects and needed to be allocated to existing projects in the programme.

Following its meeting on 28 October the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board agreed the proposal made by officers (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report) that the funding was reallocated to 7 existing projects in the programme (International Battle of the Atlantic, Future Yard, JOY Health and Wellbeing Hub, Start Yard, Birkenhead Priory, Woodside Ferry Village and New Ferry Public Realm and Highways), as detailed in the Summary Table of reallocation commitments (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report) and in the exempt Appendices 2 to 7 to the report.

The redevelopment of Woodside Ferry Village aimed to greatly enhance the existing visitor attraction and provide a high-quality food and beverage / leisure offer to maximise the opportunity afforded by the wider transformational public realm investment in that locality. The proposal met the outputs of the grant funding and would ensure that the building was sustainable and fit for purpose for generations to come.

The Chief Regeneration Officer notified Members' her recommendation was amended to the effect that recommendation 3b be withdrawn and that officers undertake a review of the program with the intention presenting the findings to the Pathfinder Board on 27th January 2025. The Interim Director of Regeneration and Place further explained the reasoning for removing the final recommendation as a precaution to ensure that money was not being promised for projects that could not be delivered. He wished to reassure Members that the program was being managed in the correct manner.

Members stated the importance of the regeneration and public realm work need in New Ferry and their hope that by removing recommendation 3b, it would not jeopardise the work that needed to be carried out there.

The Interim Director of Regeneration and Place responded that the removal of this part of the recommendation did not preclude it from being presented to committee in future. He noted that he could not recommend recommendation 3b to Members at this meeting given that they could not be sure that the money could be used. He stated that once a review had been undertaken a any recommendations arising from that review would be brought to the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board, with subsequent reporting to the Committee seeking a decision.

Members asked if money was still going to be used for public realm in New Ferry if approved the revised recommendation.

The Chief Regeneration Officer stated that the total cost required for New Ferry was £5.2m. She said that £2m had been secured but that there was a shortfall to reach the full amount, this would be brought back to the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board to consider in January 2025.

Members queried whether the Council was facilitating discussions between the relevant parties to help move along the refurbishment of the Woodside Ferry Terminal building,

The Chief Regeneration Officer noted that it was not the Council's role to mediate those discussion but that they were working with both Mersey Ferries and Woodside CIC to ensure that conditions were known and that there was encouragement for them to reach a mutually agreeable position.

Resolved – That:

- 1. Unspent sums from Transport Shed and Sustainability Central projects be re-allocated to 7 projects within the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot as set out in the proposed allocation column table in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- 2. The project at Woodside Ferry Village as set out in the Full Business Case attached as exempt Appendix 7 of the report be approved; and**
- 3. The Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to re-allocate funds into the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot programme for future re-allocation. should the conditions of the relevant grant funding not be complied with by 20 January 2025.**

129 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items 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.

Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme – Re-allocation of Unspent Funding Exempt Appendices as follows:

- Appendix 2: Birkenhead Priory Business Case;**
- Appendix 3: International Battle of the Atlantic Business Case;**
- Appendix 4: Future Yard Business Case;**
- Appendix 5: New Ferry Public Realm and Highways Business Case;**
- Appendix 6: Start-Yard Business Case; and**
- Appendix 7: Full Business case for Woodside Ferry Village.**



ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Monday 20th January 2025

REPORT TITLE:	HOUSING UPDATE REPORT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This Committee has previously agreed to receive several updates relating to housing agendas and priorities. This report along with any future ones, form part of the housing work programme with updates scheduled and informed by a range of data and performance briefings relating to both the Wirral Plan and the previously agreed and approved Economy, Regeneration and Housing Insight Report.

This report is therefore not intended to replicate the information within those reports, instead it is intended to enhance and provide further insight into a wider range of housing work which fall under the remit of this Committee.

This report primarily links and supports the Wirral Plan themes of people focussed Regeneration and promoting independence and healthier lives.

This is not a Key Decision. This does not have any ward implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to note and endorse the contents of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The information provided in this Housing report informs the Housing annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options include individual updates on each subject area, workshops or additional updates being provided. However, it was determined that this was the most effective way of briefing members on highlights by exception, in addition to other performance reports.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Update on National Housing Policy Overview

- 3.1 The King's speech in July 2024 set out the new government's legislative agenda. As expected, a significant number of new bills were announced; some of which relate directly to the housing sector including the Renter's Rights Bill and the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill.

Renters Rights Bill

- 3.2 Following on from significant reform within the Social Housing Sector last year, the Renters Rights Bill will introduce the significant changes to the private rented sector. The Bill is expected to gain Royal Assent by summer 2025. Further details of the Bill have been released recently which include a list of all the Bill's measures including:

- Changes to grounds for possession and an end to Section 21 ('no-fault') evictions;
- The establishment of a Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman;
- Creation of a Private Rented Sector Database, to help landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance alongside providing better information to tenants to make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement. This is aimed at enabling councils to appropriately prioritise enforcement activity. Landlords will need to be registered on the database to use certain possession grounds;
- Making it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against prospective tenants in receipt of benefits or with children;
- give tenants strengthened rights to request a pet in the property,
- Prohibiting landlords and agents from asking for or accepting offers above the advertised rent. Landlords and agents will be required to publish an asking rent for their property, and it will be illegal to accept offers made above this rate.
- Extending the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector. Properties must be free from serious hazards, be energy efficient and have reasonably modern facilities (including kitchens and bathrooms).
- Setting timescales for landlords to make homes safe where there are serious hazards and empowering tenants to challenge unsafe conditions; ;

- Strengthening Councils' enforcement powers by expanding civil penalties, introducing a package of investigatory powers and bringing in a new requirement for Councils to report on enforcement activity.

Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill

- 3.3 The Government also confirmed that it will act quickly to implement the provisions of the Leasehold and Reform Act 2024 which was passed by the previous government. A new Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill will enact the remaining recommendations made by the Law Commission in 2020. These include the strengthening of leaseholder's rights to extend their lease and buy their freehold (enfranchisement) and take over their freeholder's building management functions (Right to Manage).
- 3.4 The Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill will also revisit 'commonhold' tenure (an alternative to leasehold, which is underutilised) and seek to regulate ground rents.

SPECIFIC HOUSING WORK RELATED TO IMPROVING HOUSNG STANDARDS

Damp and Mould Project

- 3.5 The Council has been selected to participate in an MHCLG funded pilot looking at ways to address damp and mould in homes which complements the Public Health funding of three Healthy Homes Officers to work in the community in target areas likely to suffer from concentrations of damp homes. An evidence base has been completed by the Council's Intelligence Team, a team has been recruited and is already on the ground knocking on doors in areas with the highest risk of damp and mould and high prevalence of respiratory related illness. The pilot will limit pro-active door knocking to these areas initially so that the approach and impact can be evaluated.
- 3.6 A landlord training event on how to tackle damp in the home was fully booked out in December 2024 with a waiting list for further events to be run over the winter months. An event for professionals working on the front line was also delivered to raise awareness of the service and the Council's website is being developed to offer help and advice to households. Since 1st April 2024 the Healthy Homes Team have made 497 contacts including 226 visits, door knocking exercises and incoming reports of damp and mould via telephone or e-mail. Of these contacts 209 instances of damp and mould have been identified and either dealt with informally by the team or escalated to the Housing Standards Team for further investigation. An additional 121 referrals have been made to wider support agencies outside the council for further assistance.

High Risk tall buildings work

- 3.7 Five buildings in Wirral were identified following the Grenfell fire as they were clad with non-conforming material. This is lower risk than aluminium composite material cladding but still a fire hazard. Progress to remediate these properties is reported to MHCLG as required periodically by the Council's Housing Standards team, who has temporary dedicated staff funded from Burdens grant which is due to end on 31st

March 2025. It has been suggested that the Government will make further new burdens funding available to mayors and local authorities for additional activity to accelerate remediation in 2025/26, which will support the implementation of Local Remediation Acceleration Plan. This will be targeted on the highest risk properties in the LCR, and therefore is unlikely to be directed at the Wirral properties.

This officer will continue to oversee the remediation of these buildings as well as other considered high-risk accommodation and ensure compliance with regulations. Three of the buildings are operated by Magenta Living currently have works on site and have progressed well with removing the cladding and work nearing completion. The other two properties are operated by the NHS and whilst cladding is still in situ pending further discussions significant work has been done to reduce the fire risk of the properties including fire separation, fire doors and frames replaced, upgraded fire detection systems and a reduction in the occupancy to 40%.

Selective Licensing

- 3.8 A 4th Selective Licensing Scheme was introduced in Wirral on 1st April this year and EHR Committee approved a further statutory consultation exercise for a 5th Selective Licensing Scheme for Wirral on 6th December 2024. To date over 4177 properties have been licensed, 3004 of these have been inspected and around one in three of the properties found to be none compliant with licensing conditions requiring formal or informal action. In Scheme 4, 118 hazards have been found during 135 inspections and 24 enforcement actions have been initiated in the first few months of the new scheme alone. There have been 75 prosecutions altogether for all the Selective Licensing Schemes and 1 banning order, the latter being one of the first in the North West. This approach is proven to be effective in addressing poor performing landlords.

Enforcement

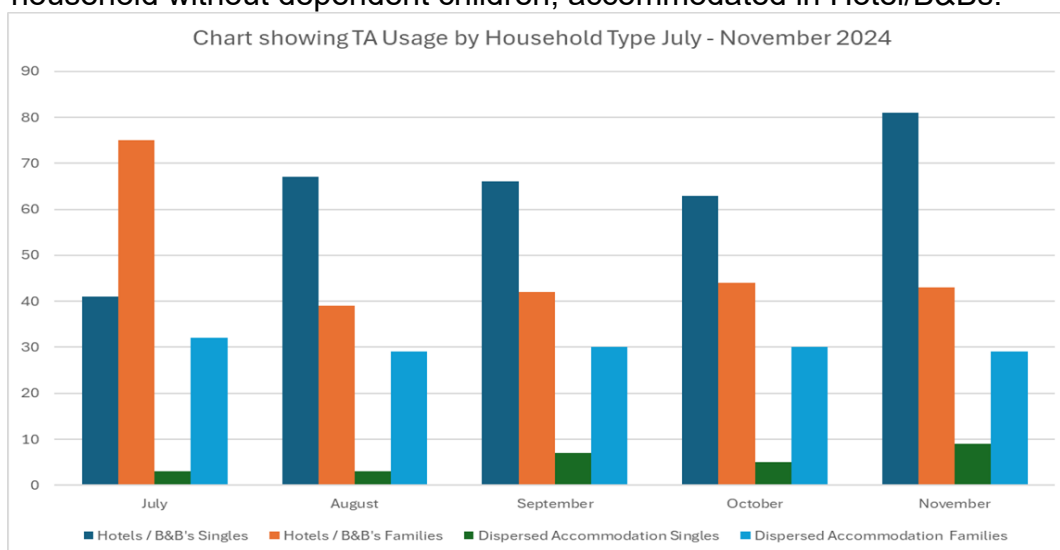
- 3.9 A full review of the Council's Housing Standards Enforcement Policy Statement has been completed with a draft new policy about to be consulted on after which a report will be presented to this Committee in March 2025. Proposed changes in legislation and determinations from Courts and Residential Tribunals, coupled with changes in national policy for robust enforcement in housing conditions that involve damp and mould have made it necessary for the Council to have a stand-alone policy which sits alongside the Corporate Enforcement Policy. The draft policy reflects the new national policy requirements and make it easier for updates to be made following any new legislation deriving from the Renter's Rights Bill over the next 12-18 months.
- 3.10 The draft policy will:
- Provide guidance to Members, officers, property businesses, and the public, on the range of options that are available to achieve compliance with legislation enforced by the Council's Housing Standards services;
 - Set out specifically, the Council's objectives and methods for achieving compliance and the criteria to be considered when deciding the appropriate response to a breach of legislation;
 - Provide the Council's Housing Standards service with a strategic delivery framework, which includes working with third party internal and external agencies

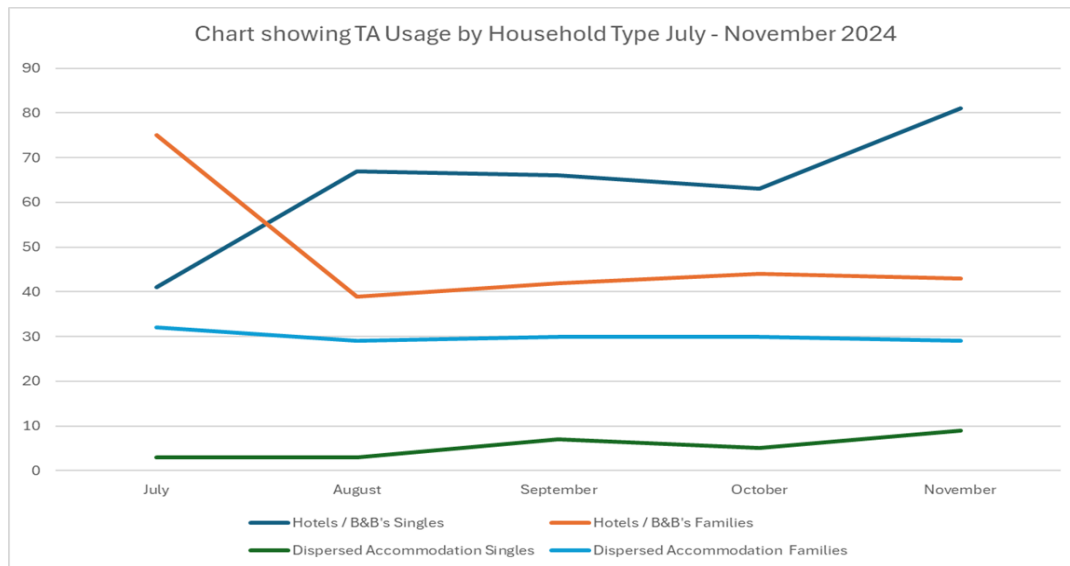
and the expectation to use the Policy to establish enhanced procedures and resourcing to deliver the requirements of the Policy.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS AND THOSE WHO NEED REHOUSING SERVICES

Homelessness

- 3.11 The service continues to see an increase in presentations from across the community. Since April 2024 the Team has seen the numbers of live applications in the region of 1,000 households at any one time, which is substantially higher than the average of 840 in 2021/22 and 900 in 2022/23 Homeless applications continue to increase because of referrals from agencies (internal and external). Pressure from national government initiatives has also contributed to the increased including Home Office Asylum decisions and prison releases. The continued use of no fault eviction notices is another factor, this being the highest reason for approaches from households.
- 3.12 The overall lack of available, affordable housing in the borough means that less people can source their own accommodation and as such are applying to the Council for assistance. For those households where the council has a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation, the number of applicants (and their families) in Temporary Accommodation continues to rise as a result. In quarters 1 and 2 of 2024-2025 the Council has supported 327 homeless household into temporary accommodation of which:
- 295 have been accommodated in hotels; and
 - 32 have been accommodated longer term in self-contained accommodation.
- 3.13 The graph below demonstrates the usage of Temporary Accommodation (Hotels/B&B and Dispersed accommodation) by household type for the period July –November 2024. There has been overall increase month by month on those accommodated in Temporary Accommodation and more specifically the number of single, couples or household without dependent children, accommodated in Hotel/B&Bs.





- 3.14 Within the 327 the majority of these have a local connection to Wirral however 36 applicants are those who have been given Leave to Remain via the asylum process. This equates to over 10% of the total.
- 3.15 The stock of Temporary Accommodation has been increased since the Quarter 2 statistics with now over 40 self-contained properties secured through expansion of lease arrangements and purchases, with a further 5 properties to come on-line by March 2025. Several opportunities are currently being pursued to increase units further. However, the increase in demand for temporary accommodation will mean a reliance on hotel accommodation for the foreseeable future, albeit it will secure more avenues for the use of hotel and bed and breakfast located within the Borough, meaning the use of out of borough placements for family cases, have not increased at the scale and pace which it could have. The use of Temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast is a national problem and one which is difficult to resolve in the short term due to lack of turnover of affordable housing in the market.
- 3.16 In regard to the issue of rough sleeping in the borough the annual count, as required by legislation was conducted on the 12/13th November. This reported an increase in the numbers of rough sleepers when compared with the previous year. In November 2023 the Council reported 3 rough sleepers and this increased to 7, which is reflective of the regional and national situation. The Council continues to invest in services to respond to the needs of this client group including the provision of mobile outreach services, however due to the limited availability of permanent accommodation for those already living in hostel settings and who are ready to live independently, fewer hostel beds are becoming available to enable rough sleepers to move in off the streets.
- 3.17 Officers continue to work collaboratively with specialist Rough Sleeping advisors from MHCLG to explore alternative accommodation options and linked funding which will form the basis of further reports to members.

Property Pool Plus (PPP) Choice Based Lettings System

- 3.18 Demand for social housing via PPP continues to be strong and far outweighs the amount of property available via PPP. The amount of social housing stock in the

borough is approximately 24,000 but in 2023-2024 there were only 983 properties advertised via PPP. The number of properties advertised is likely to be lower during 2024-2025 as most providers are effectively at maximum occupation. For example, the largest provider Magenta Living has less than 50 empty homes from their stock of around 12,500.

- 3.19 There are currently 5,247 registered applicants on Property Pool Plus of which:
- Band A 543 (of which 106 are Care Lavers, 165 are health or welfare, 249 based on homeless assessment, 23 Housing First);
 - Band B 1758 (of which 1515 are health or welfare, and 243 are based on homeless assessments); and
 - Band C 3126 (No assessed need)
- 3.20 This will mean that many households currently registered on Property Pool Plus in either additional preference (Band A) or Reasonable preference (Band B) will wait longer to be offered accommodation to meet their housing need.
- 3.21 Engagement will commence on 20th January on proposed changes to the Policy reflecting recent statutory changes to the code of guidance for allocations and also further priority to be given to people who are homeless or have been homeless and currently reside within commissioned support services, This will enable more cases to have a greater chance to secure accommodation and release the much needed support services for other people coming into the service which need it more. A final report will be brought to this Committee for endorsement of the final proposed policy amendments, with feedback on applicants and partner agencies views.

Extra Care

- 3.22 The Council has worked with several partners over the years to develop a broad range of extra care provision in various locations across the borough, including the recently completed Spinnaker House (102 units) Extra Care scheme in Rock Ferry. A total of 602 units of extra care have been developed so far in the borough. Of those, 484 are for older people, with the remaining 118 units for specialist provision for people with learning disabilities, mental health or complex needs.
- 3.23 An extra care gap analysis has identified a need to continue to increase the borough's extra care provision over future years with a requirement for an overall total of 785 units by 2035. Work continues therefore to progress opportunities to develop new extra care provision in the borough including the provision of an 80-unit extra care scheme on the Wirral Growth Company promoted site in Pasture Road, Moreton. Officers in Housing work closely with Social Care colleagues to understand their commissioning requirements and new models of extra care to shape and inform future development opportunities.

Disabled Facilities Grants/Adaptations

- 3.24 While performance is already reported in the Wirral Plan, it is important to highlight the increased demands on the service with the number of enquires increasing substantially year on year. The allocation for this year was

£5,135,810 and due to increased efficiencies with the delivery of the service, the spend at the end of Quarter 2 was £3,330,295 which represents almost 65% of the total annual budget.

- 3.25 Additional capital borrowing was approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 6th November 2024 for an additional £250k to help meet the demand and a review of cases, with those at a lower risk likely to experience delays in the completion of works as cases are approved in line with the available budget on a month-by-month basis.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising because of work programme items.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising because of work programme items.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications to Staffing, ICT or Assets

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Not applicable

8.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Not applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATION

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

- 9.2 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

10. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications.

11. COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and community wealth implications.

REPORT AUTHOR: Lisa Newman
Assistant Director – Housing Services

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Renter’s Rights Bill
Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in accordance with Section 4.2(h)(iv) of its Terms of Reference, the Authority’s role and functions to strategic and private sector housing policies and as the housing authority including licensing schemes.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

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ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Monday, 20 January 2025

REPORT TITLE:	2025-26 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide 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 is also for the Committee to consider feedback and outcomes from the Budget Oversight Panels (BOPs) which have been held in recent months. The Panels enabled officer and member liaison on proposed budget options, to facilitate discussion and allow direction to be obtained on further analysis required. The Panels also provided an opportunity for alternative proposals to be considered.

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 is 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 severe budget challenge to identify savings required to set a balanced budget for next financial year, largely due to increased demand and costs for social care services, compounded by the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements.

Unless significant, deliverable cost reductions are identified and approved, the Council will not meet its statutory obligation to set a legal and balanced budget without a significant increase in funding.

The report contributes to the Wirral Plan 2023-2027 in supporting the organisation in meeting all Council priorities.

The appendices to this report are exempt from publication under paragraphs 3 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person [including the authority holding that information]; and Information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations

or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority) and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 and 2.
2. Agree the Budget Oversight Panel feedback and outcomes, as detailed in Appendix 3.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Council has a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget, which sets out how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. This report highlights the external challenges impacting the 2025/26 budget setting process and proposes options to address the challenges faced.
- 1.2 Managing and setting a budget will require difficult decisions to ensure that a balanced position can be presented. Regular Member engagement, which this report forms part of, is considered essential in delivering effective governance and financial oversight.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The setting of a legal budget is a statutory requirement and therefore no other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council has a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget, which sets out how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. To do this effectively requires engagement with staff, elected members and residents along with other stakeholders. Previous reports to the Committee have highlighted the external challenges that are impacting on the 2025/26 budget setting process and have highlighted the extent of the financial challenge faced. This report presents the culmination of the work undertaken to present options for budget formulation and to ensure the necessary preparations to facilitate a budget recommendation to Council on 24 February 2025.
- 3.2 The Policy & Resources Committee is responsible for co-ordinating processes for the development of the Budget and Policy Framework, together with decision-making on cross-cutting policies not part of the Policy Framework. 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.
- 3.3 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has met regularly to discuss the budget setting process, budget proposals, the budget gap that the Council faces and the associated uncertainty on funding. Member engagement in the process has taken place through Budget Workshops along with the presentation of Committee reports.
- 3.4 The Budget Oversight Panels were convened to enable officer and member liaison on various budget matters, and to facilitate discussion and allow direction to be obtained on further analysis required. The Budget Oversight Panels also provided an opportunity for alternative savings proposals to be considered.

- 3.5 The outcomes of these Panels are to be reported to meetings of those committees and to the Policy & Resources Committee as part of the decision-making process that facilitates a budget proposal to Full Council.
- 3.6 Appendix 3 to this report details the feedback and outcomes from this Committee's Budget Oversight Panel.
- 3.7 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 6 November 2024, a potential budget gap of £36m for 2025/26 was presented. Members will be aware that the budget gap is an ever-moving target due to a number of factors; these include:
- Ongoing Government announcements of funding, including specifically the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2025/26
 - A process of challenge and refinement within the Council to ensure that the proposals are evidence based. Addition of new pressures that continue to materialise as further local and national evidence comes to light.
 - The continuing refinement of budget assumptions including inflation.
 - The development and refinement of budget options.
- 3.8 As a result of these factors, the budget forecast presented to P&R in November 2024 was updated and a more robust position made available. An accurate appraisal was not possible at the time as the details of the financial settlement for Local Authorities was not received until late December. Initial analysis of the proposed settlement have been discussed with Policy & Resources Committee Finance Working Group.
- 3.9 Following budget challenge sessions with Directors and a review of the Q2 budget monitoring information, a position around the current and future pressures has been ascertained. This represents the best available information at this point in time and forms the baseline for the pressures within the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for current and future years.
- 3.10 This information will be updated periodically as a significant element of the pressures is linked to inflation. Assumptions have been made that inflation will rise slightly between now and the 25/26 financial year and that this will be reflected in pay and contract negotiations for 25/26.
- 3.11 Demographic changes have been incorporated within the pressure figures based on the current trend data and the available datasets.
- 3.12 An assessment of the in-year budget variances has necessitated the inclusion of pressures to negate existing income targets and some additional funding for service pressures. These amounts have been minimised in recognition of previously agreed savings which are still to be delivered.
- 3.13 The impact of all these changes will be considered, along with feedback from the consultation process and the budget proposals developed through the Service Committee and Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) Budget Oversight Panel approach to present a robust position on financial matters to be considered in formulating a budget proposal to Full Council.
- 3.14 Policy & Resources Committee budget recommendations will be proposed in February 2025 in respect of the agreement of the annual Budget, setting of the

council tax requirement and related matters to the Council, which will be debated by Full Council and voted upon by a simple majority.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report is part of a programme of activity to ensure that a fully balanced, legal budget can be recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee to Full Council at its meeting of 24 February 2025.
- 4.2 The programme to develop a robust budget position, of which this report is a part, will support the Council in demonstrating compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code, specifically in relation to Section 4 of the FM Code which refers to the Annual Budget.
- 4.3 The FM Code requires the Council to demonstrate that the processes used satisfy the principles of good financial management, based on the following six principles:
- Organisational Leadership – demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisation culture.
 - Accountability – based on Medium-Term Financial Planning, which derives the annual budget process supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.
 - Financial management - undertaken with transparency at its core using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported frequently with evidence of periodic officer actions and elected member decision making.
 - Professional standards - Adherence to professional standards is promoted by the leadership team and is evidenced.
 - Assurance - sources of assurance are recognised as an effective tool and are mainstreamed into financial management, including political scrutiny and the results of external audit, Internal Audit and inspection.
 - Sustainability: issues around sustainability of local services are at the heart of all financial management processes and is evidenced by prudent use of public resources.
- 4.4 Delivering financial sustainability is vitally important for the Council and the budget options presented have been drawn up with this in mind, consideration is given to areas of discretionary expenditure that could be curtailed along with demonstrating savings that can be delivered from statutory components of the Council.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
- 5.2 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to

the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

- 5.3 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no additional resource requirements directly from this report, however the implications for the proposals included within the 2025/26 budget and MTFP will be assessed at the time of implementation. For budget proposals that may result in reductions to the workforce, the Council will need to consult with trade unions and relevant staff groups as required and in accordance with section 188(1A) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act (TULRCA) 1992). Statutory notices may also be required.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's ability to close the funding gap is highly dependent on the accuracy of assumptions used for Government funding and levies from other bodies, as well as demand estimates for Council services. As the Local Government Finance Settlement only covers one year, the uncertainty around future funding over the MTFP period remains high.
- 7.2 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget is dependent on a proactive approach due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the budget, albeit the best estimates available at the time, plus any amount of internal and external factors that could impact on the budget position in year. Examples of which are new legislation, increased demand, loss of income, increased funding, decreased funding, inability to recruit to posts, etc.
- 7.3 A robust monitoring and management process for the budget is in place. If at any time during the year an adverse position is forecast, remedial action must be agreed and implemented immediately to ensure the budget can be brought back to balanced position.
- 7.4 Failure to achieve a balanced budget would lead to the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice and potential ministerial intervention under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Where required, statutory budget consultation will commence. This will take place in January 2025 and feedback will be taken into consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee when recommending a budget to Full Council at its meeting of 12 February 2025.
- 8.3 The Council has engaged regularly with trade unions about the Council's financial position. All options which have a potential impact on employees are subject to employee consultation, as required.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The equality implications will be included within the individual savings proposals currently being developed and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The environment and climate implications will be considered within the individual savings proposals currently being developed and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The community wealth implications will be considered within the individual savings proposals currently being developed. The budget proposals under consideration will take account of related matters across headings such as:
- **Progressive Procurement and Social Value**
How we commission and procure goods and services. Encouraging contractors to deliver more benefits for the local area, such as good jobs, apprenticeship, training & skills opportunities, real living wage, minimising their environmental impact, and greater wellbeing.
 - **More local & community ownership of the economy**
Supporting more cooperatives and community businesses.
Enabling greater opportunities for local businesses.
Building on the experience of partnership working with voluntary, community and faith groups during the pandemic to further develop this sector.
 - **Decent and Fair Employment**
Paying all employees a fair and reasonable wage.
 - **Making wealth work for local places**

REPORT AUTHOR: Carla Wright
(Head of Finance - Place)
email: carlawright@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Budget Pressures
Appendix 2: Potential Savings
Appendix 3: Service & Policy Committee Budget Oversight Panel feedback

Please note that these appendices are exempt from publication under paragraph 3 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person [including the authority holding that information]; and Information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority) and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This matter is being considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with section 1.2(b) provide a co-ordinating role across all other service committees and retain a 'whole council' view of [budget monitoring].

BACKGROUND PAPERS

2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO (THE PERIOD TO 30 SEP 2024)
2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (THE PERIOD TO 30 JUN 2024)
BUDGET MONITORING AND BUDGET SETTING PROCESSES
Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), 'Economic and fiscal outlook' October 24.
Pressure and Growth Proposals
Savings and Income Proposals
CIPFA's Financial Management Code

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	15 January 2025
Policy and Resources Committee	6 November 2024
Policy and Resources Committee	17 July 2024
Full Council	26 February 2024
Policy and Resources Committee	13 February 2024
Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee	29 January 2024
Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee	2 February 2024
Children, Young People & Education Committee	1 February 2024
Economy Regeneration & Development Committee	22 January 2024
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	23 January 2024
Policy and Resources Committee	8 November 2023
Policy and Resources Committee	4 October 2023

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ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2025

REPORT TITLE:	ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING WORK PROGRAMME
REPORT OF:	CHAIR OF ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Economy Regeneration and Housing 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.

It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to note and comment on the proposed Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 A number of workplan formats were explored, with the current framework open to amendment to match the requirements of the Committee.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Council Plan
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Council

Terms of Reference

The Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee is responsible for the Council's adult social care and preventative and community based services. This includes the commissioning and quality standards of adult social care services, incorporating responsibility for all of the services, from protection to residential care, that help people live fulfilling lives and stay as independent as possible as well as overseeing the protection of vulnerable adults. The Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee is also responsible for the promotion of the health and wellbeing of the people in the Borough. The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:

- (a) formulation and delivery of the Council's strategic development objectives for planning, sustainability and transportation;
- (b) developing and recommending those plans and strategies which together comprise the Local Plan;
- (c) developing and adopting or recommending (if reserved to Council) other spatial planning documents, including but not limited to
 - (i) supplementary planning documents (SPD) and planning policy advice notes;
 - (ii) Master Plans and development briefs;
 - (iii) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
 - (iv) [The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when applicable];

- (d) economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure, enterprise, skills and seeking, securing and managing external funds to achieve that, directly or in partnership with joint ventures and external companies or bodies as well as with the Combined Authority and government bodies;
- (e) the Council's functions and partnerships regarding the promotion of economic growth and the establishment and development of business;
- (f) the promotion and development of the economic factors in the area, such as seeking to ensure sufficient and appropriate employment sites, investment, adult skills, apprenticeship schemes, productivity, development sites and so forth;
- (g) overseeing the progress of major projects (including major building, infrastructure or other projects involving the erection or significant alteration of major permanent structures or landmarks) undertaken by the Council directly or as enabler, funder or joint enterprise partner, including but not limited to the Wirral Growth Company LLP;
- (h) the Authority's role and functions in relation to strategic and private sector housing policies and as the housing authority, including but not limited to
 - (i) the Council's Housing Strategy;
 - (ii) homelessness and the allocation of housing;
 - (iii) private sector housing, including taking action to remedy overcrowding, disrepair, unfitness and statutory nuisances; to promote fire safety in private sector housing and the Council's functions in relation to houses in multiple occupation;
 - (iv) licensing schemes;
 - (v) tenancy relations and the provision of housing advice;
 - (vi) relationship with Registered Providers of housing;
 - (vii) housing loans and grants;
 - (viii) housing related support services;
 - (ix) policies and actions with a view to reducing and eliminating street homelessness to ensure that appropriate action is taken; and
 - (x) analysis, development and overview of housing policies in terms of spatial planning to inform the Local Plan and planning policies;
- (i) reviewing major projects and any project boards having regard to capacity to deliver, corporate priorities and resources, and advise the Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate;
- (j) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and
- (k) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising as a result of work programme items.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising as a result of work programme items.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications to Staffing, ICT or Assets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Committee's ability to undertake its responsibility to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, make decisions on policies, co-ordinate spend, and maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets may be compromised if it does not have the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct community wealth implications.

REPORT AUTHOR: Bryn Griffiths, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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APPENDICES

Committee Work Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution
 Forward Plan
 The Council's transformation programme

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee	26 January 2022 9 March 2022 13 June 2022 20 July 2022 20 September 2022 7 December 2022 26 January 2023 8 March 2023 20 June 2023 17 July 2023 18 September 2023 16 October 2023 6 December 2023 22 January 2024 27 March 2024 16 July 2024 16 September 2024 14 October 2024 04 December 2024

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ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BETWEEN JANUARY 2025 TO MARCH 2025

Title	Description	Key/ Non-Key	Date	Lead officer
20th JANUARY 2025				
Housing Update (6 Monthly)	Update on various aspects of the Housing Service.	Non-Key	January 2024	Lisa Newman
Budget Workshop Outcome Report		Non-Key	January 2024	Carla Wright / Mark Lightburn
3RD MARCH 2025				
Liscard Levelling Up Fund 3 Programme		Key	January 2024	Hannah Austin
Procurement of framework for rolling capital programme for adaptations	Approval of budget to commence tender framework for completion of building works related to housing financial assistance	Key	March 2025	Lisa Newman / Emma Foley
Former House of Fraser Sites Development Plan	To be referred to P&R	Key	March 2025	Marcus Shaw
Price Street Car Park Development Plan	To be referred to P&R	Key	March 2025	Marcus Shaw
Approval of Masterplan – Birkenhead Town Centre and St Werburgh's		Key	March 2025	Rebecca Lowry
Council Plan Performance Monitoring Q3: People Focussed Regeneration		Non-Key	March 2025	Nancy Clarkson
Q3 Budget Monitoring Report		Non-Key	March 2024	Carla Wright
Local Development Scheme for Wirral	Timetable for the preparation of statutory land use planning policy documents including the Wirral Local Plan	Key	March 2024	Andrew Fraser / Mandy Lewis

STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS

Item	Reporting Frequency	Lead Departmental Officer
Housing Update	6 Monthly Page 49	Lisa Newman

Financial Monitoring Report	Quarterly	Mark Lightburn
Regen Committee Work Programme Update	Every Cycle	Committee Team

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress
Working Groups/ Sub Committees				
Active Travel Working Group	Workshops	Ongoing	Julie Barnes	Ongoing
Establish a Task and Finish Group to examine the potential benefits and risks of Mersey Tidal Power to Wirral and liaise with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (requested via a motion at Council in December 2023)	Task and Finish Group	TBC	Director of Regeneration and Place	
Departmental Risk Register Workshop	Workshop	18 December 2024	Director of Regeneration and Place	
Mass Transit Update (request from Cllr Tomeny at December ERH) & Public Transport for Wirral Waters Briefing (Request from Cllr Bird at July ERH)	Workshop	January / February 2025	Julie Barnes / Marcus Shaw	
Budget Oversight Panels		Ongoing	Carla Wright / Marcus Shaw	

Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee – Terms of Reference

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee has responsibility for developing and delivering a vision for Wirral as a place. It is responsible for developing and determining or recommending all planning policies, including the Local Plan, and infrastructure planning. It is also responsible for promoting regeneration, economic development and associated activities, including the tourism, culture and visitor economy, and for removing barriers to growth. It is also responsible for taking a strategic approach to the Council's various housing functions, including issues concerning social rented and affordable housing, homelessness, allocations and standards of housing.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:

- (a) formulation and delivery of the Council's strategic development objectives for planning, sustainability and transportation;
- (b) developing and recommending those plans and strategies which together comprise the Local Plan;
- (c) developing and adopting or recommending (if reserved to Council) other spatial planning documents, including but not limited to
 - (i) supplementary planning documents (SPD) and planning policy advice notes;
 - (ii) Master Plans and development briefs;
 - (iii) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
 - (iv) [The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when applicable];
- (d) economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure, enterprise, skills and seeking, securing and managing external funds to achieve that, directly or in partnership with joint ventures and external companies or bodies as well as with the Combined Authority and government bodies;
- (e) the Council's functions and partnerships regarding the promotion of economic growth and the establishment and development of business;
- (f) the promotion and development of the economic factors in the area, such as seeking to ensure sufficient and appropriate employment sites, investment, adult skills, apprenticeship schemes, productivity, development sites and so forth;
- (g) overseeing the progress of major projects (including major building, infrastructure or other projects involving the erection or significant alteration of major permanent structures or landmarks) undertaken by the Council directly or as enabler, funder or joint enterprise partner, including but not limited to the Wirral Growth Company LLP;
- (h) the Authority's role and functions in relation to strategic and private sector housing policies and as the housing authority, including but not limited to
 - (i) the Council's Housing Strategy;
 - (ii) homelessness and the allocation of housing;
 - (iii) private sector housing, including taking action to remedy overcrowding, disrepair, unfitness and statutory nuisances; to promote fire safety in private sector housing and the Council's functions in relation to houses in multiple occupation;
 - (iv) licensing schemes;

- (v) tenancy relations and the provision of housing advice;
 - (vi) relationship with Registered Providers of housing;
 - (vii) housing loans and grants;
 - (viii) housing related support services;
 - (ix) policies and actions with a view to reducing and eliminating street homelessness to ensure that appropriate action is taken; and
 - (x) analysis, development and overview of housing policies in terms of spatial planning to inform the Local Plan and planning policies;
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- (i) reviewing major projects and any project boards having regard to capacity to deliver, corporate priorities and resources, and advise the Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate;
 - (j) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and
 - (k) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.