



Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Monday, 15 June 2009
Time:	6.15 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 2 - Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Brian Ellis
Tel: 0151 691 8491
e-mail: brianellis@wirral.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

AGENDA

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members are asked to consider whether they have personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they are.

Members are reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 March, 2009.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

In accordance with minute 4 of Cabinet (16/5/09), the Committee is requested to appoint a Vice-Chair.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE (Pages 7 - 12)

The terms of reference are attached for Members' information.

5. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The views of the Committee are requested concerning topics to be included in this year's scrutiny work programme

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

Present: Councillor S Mountney (Chair)

Councillors	RL Abbey	B Kenny
	A Jennings	S Niblock
	J Keeley	L Rowlands

32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement. No such declarations were made.

33 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January, 2009 be accepted as a correct record.

34 PRESENTATION - THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN - IMPACT ON WIRRAL

The Director of Corporate Services gave a presentation outlining the impact of the current recession on Wirral's economy, the package of support measures and programme interventions, including the Business Support Programme using the £50,000 identified within the Council budget resolution to support local companies during the current economic downturn, in conjunction with £800,000 p.a. of Working Wirral funds.

There was a general discussion regarding priorities within the Business Support Programme, which was linked to the use of the Working Wirral funding (see also minute 35 post).

Members noted with concern the decision of Tulip to close its Bromborough meat processing factory resulting in the loss of 300 local jobs. The efforts made by all of the interested parties in supporting an alternative proposal were acknowledged and the Director and his team were thanked for their work with Tulip.

The Director reported that he would present a monthly update report to Cabinet and this committee on the state of the local economy. He emphasised the importance of a co-ordinated approach working with the business networks, the main public sector agencies, and the voluntary sector, to develop collective responses to the current situation, and invited members to participate in this process and raise any particular issues with him or the senior management team.

Resolved: - That the Director be thanked for his presentation.

35 PRESENTATION - WORKING WIRRAL

The Director of Regeneration gave a presentation outlining proposals for the use of the Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) to commission activity to deliver the investment strategy priorities of tackling worklessness, improving skills levels and increasing enterprise, business growth and investment.

Wirral had been allocated £28.4m of WNF resources (subject to confirmation for 2010/11). Cabinet (minute 334 – 15/1/09) had agreed that consultants should be appointed to further develop the investment framework to enable targeted commissioning of the Working Wirral Programme to be taken forward to deliver activity against the three priority areas set out in the investment framework (Competitive Wirral People, Competitive Wirral Places and Competitive Wirral Businesses), and to also consider the implications of the economic downturn. This work would be completed by the end of March 2009 and reported to a future Cabinet meeting.

The Director gave a brief outline of the allocations progressed through Working Wirral round 1 commissioning and total commitments to date. He reported that there was £13m of WNF still to be allocated, and he listed some emerging priorities for consideration in the next round of commissioning:

- (i) IT Capacity and Connectivity – faster broadband to meet the needs of businesses and improve capacity
- (ii) Power supply for key development sites
- (iii) Business Support - funding for Wirral Biz had been extended until the end of June . The new Regional Business Start Programme would then take on this role.
- (iv) Land assembly – gap funding to assist firms in overcoming difficulties in lending money from banks
- (v) Branding – promoting key development sites and branding and promotion of Wirral
- (vi) Skills and Enterprise – improving the skills of Wirral people to enable them to access new employment opportunities.
- (vii) Construction Integrator and Apprenticeships – training to assist people into employment.

The Investment Strategy Board had identified a number of areas of activity that would support the investment strategy outcomes and should therefore be progressed through Working Wirral Funding. These included:-

(a) Support for Business (sustainability) – supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in Wirral was the key objective of the investment strategy and was a key priority for the Invest Wirral Team. The programme of support would be through a mixture of capital grant and also access to consultancy support. Capital grant would be offered to Wirral businesses that have viable project proposals to support the sustainability or growth of the company.

The consultancy support would assist with financial planning and developing a relevant business plan for current market conditions and businesses would receive up to three days consultancy free of charge. The total Working Wirral allocation would be £800,000 pa over a two-year period and it would be used to provide grant and consultancy support. This project would work in tandem with an ERDF project to provide support for micro-businesses via three business advocate posts, which would be provided a third party. The activity would be fully in line with the support services available regionally and the principles of business support simplification programme. The project would be marketed using the Wirral Business Forum.

(b) Infrastructure Support – Addressing infrastructure constraints was a key focus for Liverpool’s City Region partners with several key employment sites suffering from significant power supply issues. Additionally, digital access was also an issue for many areas across the north-west region. The Investment Board had identified investment in infrastructure in Wirral as an area that needed specific focus over the next twelve months, particularly in view of the difficult economic climate. Officers were currently exploring the possibility of undertaking work on identifying the issues and the exact infrastructure requirements in order to promote Wirral as a key investor location.

There was a general discussion regarding future WNF priorities during which members highlighted the importance of the construction integrator and apprenticeships, issues around IT capacity and connectivity, and infrastructure improvements in anticipation of the economic upturn.

Resolved: -

- (1) That the Director be thanked for his presentation
- (2) That the items relating to IT capacity and connectivity, and power supply, be referred to the next meeting of this committee for further consideration.
- (3) That this committee endorse the Business Support Programme and ask that it be regularly reviewed with a view to utilising further WNF to expand the scheme.

36 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - EVIDENCE BASE - STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

The Director of Corporate Services reported concerning a small increase in the cost of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework for Wirral) of £1,650, due to the need to accommodate a variation in the specification. This cost increase, together with a previously agreed variation in cost of £750 was within the ten per cent margin for cost variations which the Contract Procedure Rules indicate could be authorised under delegated powers. The report recommended that the Committee note the

expenditure of a further £1,650 excluding VAT on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, such sum to be met from existing resources within the Corporate Services Department.

Resolved - That the Committee notes the expenditure of a further £1,650 excluding VAT on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, such sum to be met from existing resources within the Corporate Services Department.

37 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMEN SPECIAL REPORT ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS MASTS

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report outlining the findings and recommendations of The Local Government Ombudsmen Special Report on Telecommunication Masts (published in June 2007), and the implications arising from it. He highlighted the initiatives implemented, and changes made within the Council's Development Control division over the last 18 months to align with the Ombudsmen's recommendations and achieve good practice in processing antennae applications.

The Director also highlighted areas for further discussion and development in order to meet the key recommendations of the Ombudsmen Special Report.

Resolved –

(1) That the Committee note the findings and recommendations of the Ombudsmen Special Report on Telecommunication Masts.

(2) That the Committee note the various changes and process improvements made within Development Control over the last 18 months, and the effectiveness of these changes in improving the determination of Telecomm Mast applications.

(3) That this Committee endorse the areas for further improvement outlined in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 relating to the scheme of delegation and liaison with local mobile operators.

(4) That with regard to the Council's position as landlord, this Committee recommend that the existing approach whereby each individual Telecomm Mast application is treated on its merits should be continued.

38 PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO DELEGATION SCHEME - DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report outlining proposed amendments the current Scheme of Delegation relating to the determination of planning applications and other associated planning matters including enforcement action (Appendix B refers).

Resolved – That the Committee endorse the proposals and recommend to Council that the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation be adopted, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

39 VALIDATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS - PROPOSED CHANGES

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report informing Members of the changes proposed to the Local Planning Authority Validation Checklist to comply with latest government guidance.

He further advised members of the statutory consultation period required prior to the adoption of the revised Validation Checklist.

Resolved – That the Committee note the proposed changes to the Validation Checklist and agree to the commencement of the public consultation process .

40 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER THREE

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report providing an overview of progress against performance indicators and key projects which are relevant to the Regeneration and Planning Strategy overview and scrutiny committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

41 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE 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 ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

42 REGENERATION UPDATE

The Director of Corporate Services provided an update on major development schemes within the borough.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The overview and scrutiny committee will:

(i) review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's functions;

(ii) make reports and/or recommendations to the Council and/or the Cabinet and/or any joint or area committee in connection with any policy or the discharge of any functions;

(iii) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants; and

(iv) exercise the right to call in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive; and

within the following terms of reference of the Cabinet portfolio(s) indicated:

Regeneration and Planning Strategy

- (1) matters relating to the economic and urban regeneration of Wirral
- (2) the economic regeneration strategy for Wirral.
- (3) all economic regeneration programmes including European programmes, any other Council programmes and residual issues in relation to the Single Regeneration Budget.
- (4) consultation and liaison with all organisations involved in regeneration in Wirral, including NWDA, English Partnerships, GoNW, Learning and Skills Council, Greater Merseyside Enterprise, Wirral Metropolitan College, trade unions, the private sector, the voluntary sector, etc.
- (5) all matters in relation to European issues.
- (6) the promotion of Wirral as a premier location for inward investment through the work of Wirral Direct and other organisations; in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Leisure in the case of tourism initiatives.
- (7) to ensure that an adequate supply of sites and premises is provided in order to cater for the needs of local businesses and to help attract new businesses.
- (8) financial support, where appropriate, to businesses, co-operatives and other profit making and non-profit making ventures for the benefit of Wirral.

- (9) provision of a comprehensive business support service to local companies.
- (10) the development of community employment and training initiatives and other initiatives designed to strengthen the economy of local communities and combat disadvantage including the development of a comprehensive “pathways to Integration” strategy for Wirral.
- (11) monitoring economic trends in Wirral and identifying examples of good practice elsewhere in the field of urban policy and economic regeneration from which Wirral can benefit.
- (12) Lobbying Government and other agencies nationally, regionally and internationally, to ensure that Wirral achieves its economic regeneration objectives.
- (13) Welfare to Work.
- (14) the Development Plan and related plans and policies.
- (15) national, regional and strategic issues, including green belt policy.
- (16) the designation and preservation of conservation areas and liaison with conservation bodies.
- (17) the application of the Planning Acts in relation to:
 - preservation of general amenity
 - shopping improvement areas
 - derelict sites
 - building regulations
 - mineral planning issues
 - contributions to the Council’s urban regeneration initiatives
 - compulsory purchase
- (19) liaison on planning matters with other local authorities and external bodies.
- (20) identification and action in relation to derelict land and building, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for the Environment.

Culture, Tourism and Leisure

- (21) the development, management, implementation and review of all aspects of the Council’s Tourism Strategy. The promotion of Wirral as a location for tourism and in consultation with the Cabinet member for Regeneration and Planning Strategy, to encourage tourism initiatives designed to bring new jobs to the Borough.

Housing and Community Safety

- (22) housing strategy.
- (23) the assessment of housing need including the needs of vulnerable people.
- (24) enabling vulnerable Clients to remain at home, through the provision of low level housing support services (the Supporting People programme).
- (25) the provision of homelessness and housing advice services, including rough sleepers.
- (26) the provision of services to enable access to accommodation.
- (27) the assessment of housing markets.
- (28) housing market restructuring and renewal.
- (29) Housing matters relating to:
- Dealing with unfitness and poor condition
 - Acquisition and clearance
 - Financial policies for home improvement funding
 - Regulation and enforcement of statutory provisions relating to private sector housing
- (30) Housing matters relating to:
- The promotion and monitoring of partnerships to achieve wider strategic housing objectives
 - Monitoring the performance of new Housing Stock Transfer organisations
 - The accreditation and licensing of private landlords
- (31) monitoring and responding to the needs of gypsies and travellers.

All portfolios

- (32) those parts of the Corporate Plan within the remit of this Committee,
- (33) to seek to achieve continuing and improving performance, better value for money and customer satisfaction in respect of those services provided through these areas.
- (34) to support the Council's equal opportunity policies by promoting and monitoring initiatives to encourage equality of opportunity amongst disadvantaged groups including: the disabled, ethnic minorities, the long-term unemployed, the poor, and women;
- (35) to scrutinise Local Area Agreements that fall within the areas set out above and to hold partners to account.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The specific terms of reference for each overview and scrutiny committee are set out below. Their general functions are as follows:

(a) Policy development and review - Overview and Scrutiny committees may:

- (i) assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of the budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- (ii) conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
- (iii) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;
- (iv) question members of the Cabinet and committees and chief officers about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area; and
- (v) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area (whether national, regional or local) to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

(b) Scrutiny - Overview and Scrutiny committees may:

- (i) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the Cabinet and committees and Council officers, both in relation to individual decisions and over periods of time;
- (ii) review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- (iii) question members of the Cabinet and committees, and chief officers, about their decisions and performance, whether generally or in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
- (iv) make recommendations to the Cabinet or appropriate committees of the Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- (v) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the overview and scrutiny committee and local people about their activities and performance; and,
- (vi) question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent).

(c) Best Value - Overview and Scrutiny Committees will:

- (i) recommend the terms of reference for best value reviews to the Cabinet;
- (ii) receive progress reports on best value reviews;
- (iii) recommend the final report and improvement plans to Cabinet.

- (d) **Finance** - Overview and Scrutiny Committees may exercise overall responsibility for any finance made available to them.
- (e) **Annual Report** - Overview and Scrutiny Committees may report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods if appropriate.
- (f) **Officers** - Overview and Scrutiny Committees may exercise overall responsibility for the work programme of any officers employed to support their work.

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

The Scrutiny Programme Board will:

- (i) approve and co-ordinate the work programme for the five themed overview and scrutiny committees including resolving any conflict between such committees;
- (ii) allocate work to (or remove work from) any of the five overview and scrutiny committees
- (iii) review or scrutinise decisions made or other actions taken in relation to any executive functions, particularly (but not exclusively) in relation to cross-cutting issues or matters not within the terms of reference of any of the five themed overview and scrutiny committees.
- (iv) consider any call-in notices in relation to any executive functions and determine such notices or allocate them to one or more of the five themed overview and scrutiny committees as it considers most appropriate.
- (v) be responsible for the development and monitoring of an annual scrutiny work programme;
- (vi) undertake scrutiny in its own right with regard to cross-cutting or strategic issues not covered by other overview and scrutiny committees;
- (vii) identify and share good scrutiny practice across all overview and scrutiny committees.

This page is intentionally left blank