

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15 September 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Hale (Chair)	
	Councillors	AR McLachlan A Jennings P Johnson K Wood RL Abbey	B Kenny S Niblock A Taylor G Ellis (In place of A Pritchard)
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	A Pritchard	

8 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.

Councillor A McLachlan declared a personal interest in respect of minute 12 (Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme) by virtue of schemes for the renovation of properties within her ward.

Councillor B Kenny declared a personal interest in respect of minute 12 (Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme) by virtue of schemes for the renovation of properties within his ward.

Councillor S Niblock declared a prejudicial interest in respect of minute 12 (Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme) by virtue of his mother's property being located within the programme area. He also declared a personal interest in respect of the following matters:

- minute 11 (Responding to the Recession) by virtue of his interest in Wirral CAB
- minute 14 (Appointment of a Delivery Partner for Wirral Fuel Poverty Initiatives) by virtue of his membership of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Authority

Councillor G Ellis declared a personal interest in minute 14 (Appointment of a Delivery Partner for Wirral Fuel Poverty Initiatives) by virtue of his membership of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Authority.

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.

9 **MINUTES**

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 June, 2009

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

10 **WORK PROGRAMME - SCHEDULE**

Further to minute 5 (15/6/09) when the committee identified the issues for scrutiny during the current municipal year, the Chair had asked that the substantive item of business for this meeting should be Wirral's response to the recession (see minute 11 post).

The Directors of Economy and Regeneration and of Corporate Services presented their recommendations to the committee with regard to the proposed work programme for future meetings.

Resolved – That the proposed work programme, as now amended , be agreed.

11 **RESPONDING TO THE RECESSION**

The Director of Corporate Services provided a summary update on the impact of the current recession on Wirral's economy and identified the steps taken by the Council to support Wirral residents and businesses in the current situation.

The Director responded to questions from members relating to:

- conclusions on the general state of the local economy drawn from key indicators;
- current business conditions
- business finance
- the housing market
- the impact on council services
- business sustainability and protection of the existing employment base
- business support interventions and future plans
- a range of employment issues including co-ordination of activities with key partners, the impact on young people in accessing education and training to secure future employment, the apprenticeship scheme, and the development of a Future Jobs Fund proposal
- the impact on the voluntary sector due to budget restraints

Resolved – That the report be noted.

12 **WIRRAL'S HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2008-11 END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT 2008-09**

The Director of Regeneration reported upon the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral for the period April 2008 to March 2009. Of the total allocation to Newheartlands of £152 m for 2008/2011, Wirral's share was £29.53m, which was matched by £10.7m Regeneration Capital Programme funding and some £60m invested by the private sector, Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's). The funding had allowed Wirral to continue its successful HMRI programme which, by the end of 2008/2009 had enabled more than 1080 homes to be acquired, 800 homes cleared and a number of key strategic sites to be assembled. He also reported that 942 homes had been renovated through the use of grant funding or via the Group Repair Scheme and the "Living Through Change" programme had helped residents to live through large scale change brought about by the HMRI programme. It had enabled the maintenance of neighbourhood stability, community safety and environmental standards in areas of acquisition and clearance.

The Director reported that the HMRI programme for 2008 - 2011 would complete the clearance programmes in Rock Ferry, Tranmere and Egremont and make a major positive difference to local communities, through the building of new homes on cleared sites. The main focus of the clearance programme for 2008-11 would be in North Birkenhead. He reported upon progress on each of the initiatives contained within the 2008/2011 programme, and provided details of target and actual funding used in the period April 2008 to March 2009.

Resolved – That the committee note the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral in the period April 2008 to Mar 2009.

13 **DESTINATION MARKETING - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2009)**

The Director of Corporate Services presented a progress report on the tourism element of the Destination Marketing Office (DMO) for the period April to September, 2009 highlighting the support being provided to Wirral's business community , to help them through the current economic downturn.

He reported that a more strategic approach that had been taken, to help local tourism businesses sustain and increase trade, during the current national economic downturn. In line with this approach, the Destination Marketing Office (DMO) had been working closely with The Mersey Partnership (TMP) and the other Merseyside boroughs, to develop a joint three-year "Partners for Tourism Growth" project for European funds. The Wirral element of the project, now secured from the NWDA's operational programme, comprised of three elements ("Play, Eat and Stay in Wirral" marketing campaigns to directly support tourism businesses, two new events and visitor research). The events included a new Wirral Golf Classic in the autumn of 2010, and a new Christmas Gourmet Fair in Port Sunlight, also to be delivered in 2010. If successful, all of these activities would directly help local tourism businesses better market their services to potential and existing visitors. The Wirral element of the bid, from the Northwest Development Agency's (NWDA) operational programme, would directly help local tourism businesses market their products and services to potential and existing visitors, more effectively and efficiently.

The Director reported that the total cost of the Wirral element of the three year project would be £600,000, of which £300,000 was a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant, matched against £300,000 from the Council's existing budget (i.e. DMO staff time and the marketing budget).

Members expressed their concern regarding the request for the council to underwrite the risk associated with the "Partners for Tourism Growth" project and asked for a further report providing a detailed breakdown of costs between the three components of the project and the expected outputs.

Resolved –

(1) That the committee note the contents of this report.

(2) (8:0) (2absts) That a further report detailing the costs between the three components of the "Partners for Tourism Growth" project and the expected outputs be circulated to members for their comments and that final approval of the recommendation be delegated to the Chair and party spokespersons.

14 **APPOINTMENT OF A DELIVERY PARTNER FOR WIRRAL FUEL POVERTY INITIATIVES & ENDORSEMENT OF WARM STREETS**

The Director of Regeneration submitted a report concerning (i) his decision, under delegated authority, to accept the tender by Energy Projects Plus to deliver the two main fuel poverty prevention initiatives in Wirral; and (ii) seeking endorsement of "Warm Streets" – a new initiative to increase take-up of cavity wall and loft insulation in parts of the Borough not targeted by the existing fuel poverty prevention initiatives.

Resolved – That the committee note the appointment, under delegated authority, of a delivery partner for "CosyHomes" and "Warmer Wirral".

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

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

16 **USE OF DELEGATED AUTHORISATION FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF TENDERS**

The Director of Regeneration reported concerning the acceptance of the following tenders under his delegated authority:

- Internal and external refurbishment of 23, 28, 49, 50, 57 & 61 Palatine Road Seacombe in connection with the HOUSED (Home Ownership Using Sustainable Empty Dwellings) Scheme; which is delivered by the Empty

Property Team (Housing Standards Team). Contract awarded to Whitfield & Brown (Developments) Ltd.

- Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters. Contract awarded to GVA Grimley.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

17 **REGENERATION UPDATE**

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

Resolved – That the report be noted.

18 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

2009/10 Quarter One Performance and Financial Review

In accordance with the new procedure for the reporting of performance information, D Ball explained that the above report was now available on the internet Library pages for the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He gave a presentation comprising an overall performance commentary and summary, and identifying key performance issues, key risks, and key financial issues.

Resolved – That the report be noted.