



## Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tuesday, 15 September 2009</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.00 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall</b>

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### 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 - 4)

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 June, 2009.

#### 3. WORK PROGRAMME - SCHEDULE

At its last meeting on 15 June (minute 5) the committee identified the following items for scrutiny during the current municipal year:

- Wirral's response to the recession.
- Taking forward the Investment Strategy
- Power and Infrastructure
- Housing Market Renewal
- Choice Based Letting
- Homelessness

and also asked for regular updates on major development schemes.

The Chair has asked that the substantive item of business for this meeting is Wirral's response to the recession. Officers will present recommendations to this meeting with regard to the ordering of the remaining items on the work programme for future meetings.

4. **RESPONDING TO THE RECESSION (Pages 5 - 12)**
5. **WIRRAL'S HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2008-11  
END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT 2008-09 (Pages 13 - 20)**
6. **DESTINATION MARKETING - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE  
(APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2009) (Pages 21 - 28)**
7. **APPOINTMENT OF A DELIVERY PARTNER FOR WIRRAL FUEL  
POVERTY INITIATIVES & ENDORSEMENT OF WARM STREETS  
(Pages 29 - 36)**
8. **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND  
PUBLIC**

The following item contains 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 item of business on the grounds 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.

9. **USE OF DELEGATED AUTHORISATION FOR THE ACCEPTANCE  
OF TENDERS (Pages 37 - 40)**
10. **REGENERATION UPDATE**  
  
Verbal report
11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**



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## **ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Monday, 15 June 2009

Present:

Councillor	J Hale (Chair)	
Councillors	AR McLachlan	RL Abbey
	A Jennings	B Kenny
	P Johnson	S Niblock
	A Pritchard	R Wilkins (In place of
	K Wood	A Taylor)

### **1 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.

### **2 MINUTES**

The Director of Law , HR and Asset Management submitted the minutes of the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 March, 2009

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

### **3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

In accordance with minute 4 of Cabinet (12/5/09), the Committee was requested to appoint a Vice-Chair.

On a motion by the Chair seconded by Councillor Johnson it was:

Resolved – That Councillor K Wood be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the current municipal year.

#### 4 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference were submitted for Members' information.

Resolved – That the terms of reference be noted.

#### 5 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**

The Chair referred to his discussions with chief officers regarding issues that were likely to be significant over the next twelve months. The following issues were identified for scrutiny by this committee:-

Wirral's response to the recession  
Taking forward the Investment Strategy  
Power and Infrastructure  
Housing Market Renewal  
Choice Based Letting  
Homelessness

There was an opportunity for members to raise additional items with the Chair, and any urgent items could also be considered.

In addition to the above, members asked for a regular verbal update on major development schemes.

In view of the comprehensive workload and additional responsibilities attached to this committee, members asked the Director of Corporate Services to prepare a printed work programme.

Resolved – That a work programme listing the reports from chief officers on key issues during the year and the progress of major development schemes form the basis of the committee's work programme for the current municipal year.

#### 6 **CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLANS**

Further to minute 8 (Planning Committee – 21/5/09) when consideration was given reports, appraisals and management plans, prepared by consultants Donald Insall and Partners, the Director of Technical Services requested that this committee endorse recommendation to Cabinet for the designation of eight conservation areas:-

- (i) Bidston Village
- (ii) Birkenhead Park
- (iii) Bromborough Pool
- (iv) Caldy Village
- (v) Eastham Village
- (vi) Rock Park
- (vii) Thurstaston

(viii) Wellington Road

Resolved - That this Committee recommend to Cabinet that:-

(1) The Appraisals for the following areas be adopted by the Council and used to inform the evidence base for the preparation of future planning policy in the forthcoming Local Development Framework and used as a material consideration in determining future applications for planning permission, listed building and conservation area consent:-

- (i) Bidston Village
- (ii) Birkenhead Park
- (iii) Bromborough Pool
- (iv) Caldy Village
- (v) Eastham Village
- (vi) Rock Park
- (vii) Thurstaston
- (viii) Wellington Road

(2) The Management Plans act as an agenda for further consultation both locally and within the Council to identify priorities for action and the resources necessary for their implementation.

## **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) Vauxhall Motors Plant, Ellesmere Port

The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services reported upon the present position regarding the future of the plant and representations that were being made by this Council to Peter Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, and his department's senior civil servants.

(b) The North West Regional Construction Awards held on 21 May 2009 - Cheshire Warrington & Wirral Best Practice Award was made to Kier North West for the New Brighton Floral Pavilion Theatre.

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2009

### REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/ DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

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#### RESPONDING TO THE RECESSION

##### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the latest impact of global economic conditions on Wirral's economy, and identifies the steps taken by the Council and its partners to respond to the recession through the development of a Recession Plan. This Plan will contain measures to mitigate the impact of the Recession but at the same time maintain momentum on our Investment Strategy.
- 1.2 Members are asked to:
- i.) Note the contents of this economic update
  - ii.) Note the development of a Recession Plan, aimed at minimising the impact of the recession on Wirral residents and businesses, and planning for future recovery.

##### 2. Background

- 2.1. The key element of responding to the recession is good intelligence. Members will be aware that the Council and a range of partners have been meeting regularly since January 2009 to gather intelligence and develop responses to support Wirral residents and businesses in the current situation.
- 2.2. Wirral Officers are continuing to measure local impact and collate a range of data and indicators.
- 2.3. In recent months, the Council has held a series of strategic partner meetings to ensure a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to the current economic climate. Feedback from partners is being collated in a systematic and co-ordinated way, including:
- through monthly meetings between the Council and business leaders;
  - across the Council, through a key officers group;
  - with strategic partners through the LSP; and
  - through a series of wider partnership meetings
- 2.4. Strong partnership working at an operational level is being supported and developed by the WEDS partnership which is receiving regular updates on the downturn and partners share organisational intelligence and policy updates. Officers are also participating in Merseyside meetings to look at the effects of the recession, and agree some co-ordinated responses.

- 2.5. The aim is the development of a Recession Plan based on a robust evidence base including key economic indicators as well as qualitative feedback from partners about the impact of the recession. This intelligence is then used to inform the investment decisions made by Wirral Council and local partners, and to aid the design of appropriate interventions.
- 2.6. The underlying principle of responses is based on good economic intelligence and policy, with an understanding of business fundamentals and long term strengths. There is a need to maintain a long-term focus on skills, innovation and regeneration and it is important to keep a longer term strategy ready for when recovery starts.

### **3. Key Indicators**

#### **3.1. Labour market data**

It is important to note the limitations of many official data sources. For example, data may not be available at the Wirral district level or lower. Furthermore, much of the data has a significant time lag – thereby not accurately reflecting more recent economic conditions. Notwithstanding that, the following is a summary of key indicators:

#### **3.2. Employment rate**

Despite the current economic conditions, Wirral's Employment Rate is increasing. Latest data to December 2008 shows that Wirral's rate has gone up by 0.4% points to 68.7%. Wirral's upward trend compares favourably with a national decrease in the Employment Rate over the same period.

#### **3.3. Worklessness**

Latest data for July 2009 indicates that Wirral's Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) rate now stands at 5.7%. This represents 10,476 people. However it is important to note that high numbers of people continue to flow off the JSA register each month, indicating that the labour market remains fairly buoyant. For example, data from Job Centre Plus (JCP) indicates that in June 2009, 1963 people flowed off the JSA register. This was higher than the June 2008 number of 1452 people.

#### **3.4. Homelessness**

Data compiled by Merseyside Information Service (MIS) indicates that Wirral has seen a significant reduction in the numbers of people presenting themselves as intentionally homeless over the last year. This is largely due to the Council's increased support and approach to tackling homelessness.

### **4. Feedback from partners**

As outlined above in section 2.3, Wirral Council is also co-ordinating a wide range of feedback and evidence from our partners in order to gain a comprehensive profile of impact. Current evidence includes the following:

#### **4.1. Impact on Young People**

Feedback from Greater Merseyside Connexions <sup>1</sup> highlights that the recession is likely to impact on post-16 retention in education and training. Some young people experiencing financial difficulty themselves or as members of families experiencing financial difficulty are likely may drop out of education or training joining the NEET group.

Retail has been one of the sectors most affected in the early stages of the current recession. The other sectors that have been most effected are construction and financial services.

The LSC 2006 Greater Merseyside Skills Assessment identified that 56% of young people aged 16 to 19 who were working were employed in the retail and hospitality and catering sectors. The high percentage is partly accounted for by sixth formers and college students working in these sectors, which offer part-time employment opportunities less likely to conflict with school or college attendance.

Consumer spending is widely reported in the media to be down, and this will reduce the availability of part-time work in these industries for young people.

A reduction in the availability of work in these sectors is likely to impact on retention and increase the likelihood that some school and college students will for financial reasons drop out of education and into the NEET group while seeking employment. These should add to the NEET 'churn' rather than the 'inactive' or 'unavailable' NEET.

#### **4.2. Benefits (Housing & Council Tax Benefits plus Local Housing Allowance)**

The increase in Housing Benefit (HB) claimants continues, with an increase of 334 in the last month. HB claims now stand at 39,709. Current schemes have increased by 8% over same time last year.

#### **4.3. Housing Market.**

Feedback from Housing colleagues suggests that, in certain areas of Wirral, numbers of sales appear to be increasing. Generally West Wirral appears to be more buoyant than East Wirral.

There is increasing evidence of private sector landlords running into financial difficulties and having properties repossessed. Availability of mortgage finance is still very constrained with around 85% loan currently being the norm. People who are self employed or in temporary employment are finding it more difficult to obtain mortgage finance. Feedback from Housing Associations indicates that as they approach their head room limit financiers are imposing higher interest rates.

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<sup>1</sup> *'The Impact of the Recession on the Employment Prospects of the Young People of Wirral'* (April 2009) Carolyne Kershaw: Great Merseyside Connexions Service.

#### **4.4. Business Rates (National Non Domestic Rates) & Council Tax**

The impact continues to be felt with year on year collection of business rate at 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009 showing a 3% downturn which is similar to that seen over the previous year. Council Tax collection from domestic charge payers remains at previous year's rates which is nationally well above average and shows thus far no decline although it continues to be carefully monitored.

#### **4.5. Adult Social Services**

Feedback from Wirral's Adult Services suggests that the impact of the recession is being felt. Examples include an increasing number of people applying for an extension to the 12 week exemption period. (it is assumed that people will be able to sell their houses within 12 weeks); and more claims for additional allowances for people with a disability.

#### **4.6. Impact on the Third Sector**

Wirral CAB is reporting a significant increase in contact from Wirral residents seeking support for a variety of reasons. Debt rose by 21% and Benefit advice by 17% respectively when comparing 2007/08 to 2008/2009.

The VCAW & WVCSN conference evaluation reported an increase of the affects on the sector due to the recession.

#### **4.7. JOB CENTRE PLUS (JCP)**

JSA benefit 'On and Off' Flows

- June 08 on flow 1779
- June 09 on flow 1944
  
- June 08 off flow 1452
- June 09 off flow 1963

Vacancies notified

- June 08 1669
- June 09 802

*(As a national average, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) has around half of the nationally available vacancies. However, that percentage rate can vary considerably when its gets down to regional and local levels)*

#### **4.8. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service**

The recession is having a varying set of impacts in relation to the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. Historically commercial fires increase as businesses fail, and there is often an increase in vehicle fires. Domestic fires are known to increase as statistically and anecdotally unemployed people become at more risk from fires in the home. Anti social behaviour fires can be tracked to SOA's experiencing higher levels of multiple deprivation.

#### **4.9. NHS Wirral**

NHS Wirral commissions Wirral Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to provide an advice service for patients within general practice premises. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the take-up of this service has increased and in

particular from the non- affluent areas of Wirral. Anecdotally, the demand for mental health services, particularly some of the services offered through the voluntary sector, is increasing.

The NHS, both locally and regionally, are continuing to consider how the NHS can mitigate the impact of the recession through health inequalities prevention activities, service provision and corporate citizen role, e.g. recruitment and workforce and procurement.

#### **4.10 Business Link**

Feedback from the Business Link Advisers indicates that most businesses are taking more prudent measures with costs and many are looking for assistance with marketing. A number of the smaller businesses are moving out of business accommodation and into their domestic residence.

On a positive note feedback suggests some positive signs, with a fair number of businesses reporting steady state or growth.

### **5. Wirral Responding to the Recession**

5.1. The Council and its partners continue to meet to agree the best ways to support Wirral residents and businesses in the current situation. The interventions outlined below detail some of the existing and planned opportunities, developed in response to our detailed understanding of the impact.

#### **5.2. Business Support**

Monthly meetings continue between the Council and business leaders. In addition - as partners are aware from previous reports - a structured package of support to businesses has been developed and launched. This has received considerable interest from businesses. Two meetings of the grants panel have taken place to decide on applications up to £20,000. To date a number of awards have been approved, safeguarding 67 jobs.

In addition, a number of Think Big Grants for amounts in excess of £20,000 have been awarded. The support awarded to these businesses will result in the creation of 96 new jobs.

A special two day event was held at Invest Wirral offices as part of European SME week. Several Wirral based companies made appointments to participate in a series of face-to-face meeting with business advisory agencies, such as The Manufacturing Institute, Business Link Northwest, National Apprenticeship Service, and Wirral Council. Following the sessions all of the agencies are now continuing to work closely with the companies.

Latest information from organisations representing business suggests that whilst things were not getting any better, at this stage they did not seem to be getting any worse. The willingness of banks to lend seems to be improving slightly. However, the terms and conditions attached to loans are still more onerous than was the case in the past. Feedback also suggests that there is still a significant level of interest in investment despite economic downturn.

### **5.3. Employment Support**

Key partners (Wirral Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council) continue to co-ordinate activity through the Wirral Economic Development and Skills (WEDS) Partnership.

### **5.4. Apprenticeships**

The Apprenticeship Programme has now moved into delivery, with marketing to businesses taking place through the Business Networks.

This has resulted in a large number of businesses showing considerable interest in the programme. A wide range of apprenticeship opportunities have come forward with the majority from local SMEs who have never accessed the apprenticeship system before. Of the 100 opportunities, the project has had 156 employers come forward seeking assistance and a further 21 since the closing date.

The City Employment Strategy (CES) recently made available an unallocated £275,000 of ESF Complementary Strand and asked City Region partners to identify potential projects. Wirral proposed that the allocation should be used to fund an additional number of 17 apprenticeships for the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme with a focus on SMEs with no previous history of employing apprenticeships. Officers are pleased to report that Wirral's proposal was approved by the CES Board and that this additional ESF resource will enable funding of an additional 17 apprenticeships.

The implementation process for the Apprenticeship Programme continues and further information will be brought back to members at a future meeting.

### **5.5. Future Jobs Fund**

A separate report on this issue was discussed at Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> June. Wirral is working with City Region partners to develop a Future Jobs Fund proposal. This was submitted to Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on 30<sup>th</sup> June. In early August, DWP confirmed that the Liverpool City Region application to the Future Jobs Fund has been successful. See DWP website for list of successful applications: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns/futurejobsfund/>

The contractual details and overall level of funding granted to the partnership has yet to be determined and there are a number of further discussions to be had before we will be able to clarify the detail of the award. We expect to meet with City Employment Strategy lead officers in the next fortnight to discuss the implications of this announcement and to understand the timeline for agreeing contractual detail with DWP and Knowsley Borough Council (as the lead authority in the city region bid). Further information will be brought back to members in a future report.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1. Wirral partners continue to take forward a co-ordinated and coherent response to the economic situation. The Council is co-ordinating regular meetings with key partners to develop effective and timely responses to the recession.

6.2. Our approach thus far is forming the basis of a 'Recession Plan', whereby consideration is being given to both formalising our robust understanding of the impact, and also to use this to inform strategic and operational service planning for the short and longer term.

**7. Financial Implications**

There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

**8. Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications arising as a direct result of this report.

**9. Equal Opportunities Information**

All of the activity outlined in this report promotes equal opportunities.

**10. Community Safety Implications**

None as a result of this report

**11. Local Agenda 21 Implications**

None as a result of this report

**12. Planning Implications**

There are no planning implications arising as a direct result of this report

**13. Anti-Poverty Implications**

None as a result of this result

**14. Human Rights Implications**

None as a result of this result

**15. Social Inclusion Implications**

None as a result of this report

**16. Local Member Support Implications**

None as a direct result of this report

**RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to:

- i.) Note the contents of this update report.
- ii.) Note the development of a Recession Plan, aimed at minimising the impact of the recession on Wirral residents and businesses, and planning for future recovery.

**J. WILKIE**

Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services

This report was prepared by Rose Boylan who can be contacted on 691 8037.





## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 15th 2009

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

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

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#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

#### 2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) allocated Newheartlands (the Merseyside Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder) a sum of £152 million for Housing Market Renewal funding from its Pathfinder Programme for the years 2008 – 2011. Wirral's indicative share of this allocation is £29.53 million. The allocation to Wirral of HMRI funding for 2008-09 was £10.54million.

2.2 The Newheartlands HMRI Business Plan for the 2008-11 programme was approved by Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2007. This set out the vision for Wirral's HMRI Strategy, specific housing market renewal objectives, priorities for investment and a range of programme scenarios.

2.3 Housing Market Renewal funding for 2008-11 will be complemented by £10,700,000 Regeneration Capital Programme funding, which is considered as match funding to HMRI funds.

2.4 It is anticipated that up to £60 million will be invested in New Build development by the Private Sector, Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords, in the period 2008-11. Over £1.5 million will be invested in the programme from Government Warm Front to further support housing market renewal. This is also recorded as match funding that enhances and adds value to HMRI funding.

2.5 The funding for 2008-11 will allow Wirral to continue its successful HMRI programme. By the end of 2008-09, more than 1080 homes had been acquired, 800 homes had been cleared using HMRI funding and a number of key strategic sites had been acquired. 942 homes have been renovated through the use of grant funding or via the Group Repair Scheme. The "Living Through Change" programme has helped residents to live through large scale change brought about by the Housing Market Renewal programme. It has enabled the maintenance of neighbourhood stability, community safety and environmental standards in areas of intervention. The programme of Housing Market Renewal in Wirral for 2008 - 2011 will 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 increasingly, will be in North Birkenhead.

#### 3.0 THE HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2008-11

- 3.1 The Housing Market Renewal Programme 2008-11 consists of the following initiatives:
- Birkenhead Phase 1 Clearance
  - Birkenhead Phase 2 Clearance
  - Rock Ferry (Fiveways) Clearance
  - Tranmere (Church Road ) Clearance
  - Tranmere (Borough Road ) Clearance
  - Wallasey (Woodhall/Royston Avenues)Clearance
  - Strategic site assembly
  - Group Repair Improvements
  - Private Sector Home Improvements
  - Living Through Change
  - Rock Ferry (Sevenoaks) New Build
  - Extra Care Scheme New Build
  - Rock Ferry (Bedford Road) New Build
  - Tranmere (Church Road ) New Build
  - Tranmere (Holt Hill) New Build
  - Tranmere (Southwick Road ) New Build
  - Wallasey (Woodhall/Royston Avenues)New Build
  - Wallasey (Stringhey Road)New Build
  - Staffing and Resources
- 3.2 The following sections of the report set out the detail of progress on each of the above initiatives, in the period April to March 2009.
- 3.3 The targets for the 2008-11 Programme and the two financial years that make up the programme were agreed by Cabinet, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

In summary, the key output targets and performance for the year April 2008– March 2009 are:

	<b>Target Apr 2008- Mar 2009</b>	<b>Actual Performance Apr 2008- Mar 2009</b>
<b>Acquisitions</b>	79	106
<b>Demolitions</b>	111	129
<b>Decent Homes Improvements (inc. Group Repair)</b>	98	133
<b>Group Repair Improvements (non – decent homes standard)</b>	90	28
<b>Energy Efficiency Improvements</b>	515	680
<b>New Build RSL</b>	45	46
<b>New Build Private</b>	14	0

There were only 28 Group Repair non – decent homes because the rest of the Group Repair improvements achieved Decent Home standard. The total number of improvements (161) was less than the total forecast (188) as take up on Equity Loans was slow and less than forecast.

The forecast New Build Private units were Homebuy units which were completed but changed to Rent because of the current economic climate. The scheme at Fox Street, Birkenhead was delayed as the scheme had to be resubmitted to planning.

Further commentary on actual performance against targets is contained in the sections below.

#### **4.0 CLEARANCE**

##### **4.1 TRANMERE**

A total of 7 units were acquired through agreement, including 3 commercial properties and 4 private homes. Demolition has taken place of 47 properties, 19 on Church Road, 2 in Frodsham Street, 3 in Thompson Street and 12 in Warrington Street. The target figures for the year were 12 acquisitions and 30 demolitions. There are 3 residential properties and 14 commercial units still to be acquired in the Church Road Masterplan and Holt Hill Clearance areas.

##### **4.2 ROCK FERRY (FIVEWAYS)**

A total of 8 private properties were acquired through agreement against a target of 11. Demolition of 48 properties has taken place, just over the target of 45 for the year. The remaining 8 acquisitions will be completed later this year when the occupants move into the new build homes on Fiveways. A small strip of land remains to be agreed to complete the whole scheme.

##### **4.3 BIRKENHEAD (PHASE 1)**

In the Station Road/Tyrer Street Clearance area, 1 further property acquisition remained to be completed; however this property has been already demolished by Building Control for safety reasons. Demolition has taken place of the other remaining 9 properties on Station Road to provide a cleared site. The New Dock Inn, adjacent to the Station Road/Tyrer Street Statutory Clearance area, was acquired in September 2008 to be demolished in 2009.

##### **4.4 BIRKENHEAD (PHASE 2)**

Progress with acquisitions in the Milner/Carrington Streets Clearance area has been rapid with 79 properties acquired in the period April 2008 to March 2009. 2 commercial properties on the opposite side of Laird Street have also been acquired to enable businesses in the Clearance area to relocate to properties to be included in the fourth phase of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme.

##### **4.5 WALLASEY (Woodhall/Royston Avenues)**

10 properties have been acquired leaving one remaining commercial property. Negotiations are ongoing with the owner, but consultation with counsel is underway prior to using Compulsory Purchase powers. Demolition has taken place of 22 units. Sale of the site to Cosmopolitan Housing Association was completed in March 2009.

#### **5.0 GROUP REPAIR IMPROVEMENTS**

5.1 The Triangles Group Repair scheme comprises the external renovation of 450 properties, mainly private sector owner occupied houses, with grant support, in line with the North Birkenhead Framework for Regeneration. The works include renewal of roofs, fascias, rainwater goods, new windows and doors, repair and redecoration to elevations and boundary walls. The scheme offers a 75% grant with a means tested household contribution of up to 25%.

5.2 Phases 1 and 2 and 3 are now complete. Phase 3 completed in March 2009 with 139 properties completed of which 111 achieved the Decent Home Standard, far in excess of the target of 50.

5.3 Preparatory work has begun on the fourth phase of the Triangles Group Repair scheme and the first phase of the Craven/Paterson Streets Neighbourhood Facelift Scheme.

## 6.0 PRIVATE SECTOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS

6.1 Funding has been used to enable improvements to 16 properties of sustainable private sector housing stock to Decent Homes Standard in the Church Road area of Tranmere, under the 50/50 grant loan scheme. Four properties, two in Birkenhead and two in Tranmere have been improved to Decent Homes standard as part of the HOUSED scheme run by the Empty Property Team. These give first time buyers or those within clearance areas the opportunity to purchase previously empty homes which have been refurbished at a discount.

A further two properties have been improved to Decent Homes standard after receiving Empty Property Loans.

6.2 There are 9 active enquiries for Equity Renewal Loans in Egremont, in progress.

## 7.0 LIVING THROUGH CHANGE

7.1 The Living Through Change Programme covers a number of non-physical interventions aimed at maintaining environmental standards, community safety and community cohesion throughout the Housing Market Renewal areas. In addition, the programme covers some environmental improvements. The programme supports the Clearance, New Build and Improvement programmes and reduces the potential negative impact on residents, in the Housing Market Renewal areas.

During the period April 2008 to March 2009 the following activity has taken place:

- Live Wirral Wardens have dealt with 2721 fly tipping incidents, well above the target of 2040 and secured 115 properties to maintain environmental standards and keep the HMRI area clear of fly tipping.
- Live Wirral Wardens have dealt with 1220 requests from residents.
- The HMR Anti – Social Behaviour Officer dealt with 169 active enforcement cases within HMRI area compared with a target of 120. She has engaged with 292 residents in the HMRI area, this does not include complainants or witnesses involved in allocated cases.
- The Homemovers Service has completed 79 cases to assist households affected by clearance, with a further 39 cases ongoing. 9 first time buyers have been assisted into home ownership in the Housing Market Renewal Area, through the First Homes scheme. The scheme provides support and guidance, a financial incentive up to £2,000 towards purchasing and moving costs, referral to an Independent Financial Adviser for mortgage advice and access to other support services.
- The Handyperson Service has carried out basic maintenance works to assist 566 vulnerable people; this is less than the target of 720, largely due to the service being a member of staff short.
- The Landlord Accreditation Scheme has accredited 72 private landlords and 212 properties exceeding the targets of 65 landlords and 130 properties.

7.2 This programme of initiatives continues to be well received by the local community.

## 8.0 NEW BUILD

8.1 8 properties for rent on the site of the old "Pilot" public house, in Beckwith Street, Birkenhead, bought by Cosmopolitan and 7 properties for rent at Bentinck Street, Birkenhead, developed by Regenda have been completed.

8.2 A scheme to build 14 houses for rent at Fox Street, Birkenhead started on site at the end of March 2009 and is scheduled for completion in June 2010.

- 8.3 Lovell is now building on site at Sevenoaks, Rock Ferry (cleared site at Fiveways) and the official launch took place on September 19th 2008. The first homes will be ready in Summer 2009.
- 8.4 The scheme on the cleared site of 33 -51 Bedford Road, Rock Ferry to be developed by Wirral Methodist Housing Association, will consist of 4 four bedroom houses, 2 three bedroom houses and 2 two bedroom flats all built to lifetime homes standard. Start on site was at the end of September 2008 and is scheduled for completion in August 2009.
- 8.5 15 RSL properties on the Holt Road development in Tranmere were completed in June 2008.
- 8.6 The Venture Housing scheme at Leighton Road, Tranmere consisting of 16 houses and bungalows completed in February 2009.
- 8.7 The development agreement with Lovell, the Council's selected private sector developer for the Church Road area in Tranmere, was completed in April 2009. The first phase of the development will comprise a retail centre of 8 units on the former Abakhan site, subject to detailed planning consent. The housing element of the development programme will be held in abeyance for a short period due to the "credit crunch" and general downturn in the housing market.
- 8.8 The Southwick Road new build scheme on the former "Saunders" site on Old Chester Road, Tranmere started on site in February 2009. This is a Maritime Housing scheme and comprises 21 two bedroom apartments for rent and will complete in early 2010.
- 8.9 Maritime Housing are also building 2 two bedroom bungalows for rent, on the cleared site of 28-34 Aspendale Road, Tranmere. These are scheduled for completion in early 2010.
- 8.10 The scheme at Holt Hill, Tranmere, to be developed by Maritime Housing, will form part of the 2010-11 programme.
- 8.11 The Extra Care scheme being developed by Housing 21 to provide housing for older people with extra care needs will be built on the site of the former Somerville Primary School, in Wallasey. Demolition has been completed enabling a start on site in March 2009.
- 8.12 The schemes at Stringhey Road (Venture Housing) and Woodhall/Royston Avenues (Cosmopolitan Housing), Wallasey are on site and completions will be reported as part of the 2009-10 and 2010 -11 programmes.

## 9.0 **MARKETING & PUBLICITY**

- 9.1 Since April 2008, Marketing & Communication focus has been on "Live Wirral Love Wirral", a high profile, intensive marketing campaign promoting eastern Wirral as an exciting, vibrant place to live, work and play. The strategy ensured that key messages were communicated to all stakeholders and residents through a consistent strong flexible brand that is lifestyle driven and promotes the key attributes of Wirral as an area in which to live. Campaigns have included the use of a mix of communication channels such as signage, events, outdoor advertising, radio advertising and newsletters, supported by a range of marketing collateral.

9.2 In addition to campaign led activity, promotion of HMR funded services has been a priority and consequent sub brands created to fit in with the Live Wirral brand family. This has strengthened the brand and provided clarity around the products and services, HMR delivers. The launch of the Live Wirral website has provided another vehicle for communications to stakeholders and the community, enabling up to date information to be available at all times.

9.3 Other activity included:

- HMRI Regeneration Day with Prenton High School pupils
- HMRI Regeneration Day with Wallasey School pupils
- Royston/Woodall Avenue Consultation Event
- Tranmere Show
- Fiveways Start on Site Event attended by Frank Field MP
- Sponsorship of Park High Students “Hooked on Fishing” Project
- Attendance at SafeSpace Event, Central Park, Wallasey
- Attendance at NEEC 2009 (North of England Education Conference)
- Knowles Street Open Day
- Live Wirral Community Awards 2008
- Live Wirral Wardens Catwalk

9.4 Press Releases issued:

- Brick by brick: A new future is laid for Wirral Fiveways
- Tenants queuing up to rent accredited properties
- Rain doesn't dampen Wallasey's Parklife
- Hooked on Fishing
- Lovell Developer Agreement
- HMR Funding Announcement
- Empty Property Team
- Landlord Accreditation Team

## 10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The table below shows the target and actual funding used in the period April 2008– Mar 2009.

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Target Apr 2008– Mar 2009</b>	<b>Actual Apr 2008– Mar 2009</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
HMRI	£10,510,000	£10,540,000
<b>Match Funding:</b>		
Regeneration Capital	£3,577,000	£4,797,995
Capital receipts	£353,750	£457,726
Warm Front (Government)	£600,000	£603,000
North West Climate Fund	£0	£27,500
<b>Total Match Funding</b>	<b>£4,530,750</b>	<b>£5,886,221</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£15,040,750</b>	<b>£16,426,221</b>

## **11.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

## **12.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme will have a positive impact on some of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Wirral.

## **13.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 HMRI will result in some clearance of poorly designed, unsafe or obsolescent areas and the creation of safer, more secure living environments.

## **14.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 Housing Market Renewal will improve the quality of living environments and environmental standards throughout many parts of Wirral. New high quality, decent homes with enhanced energy efficiency standards and better use of renewable building materials will contribute towards Sustainable Development and Climate Change priorities.

## **15.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 HMRI aims to bring about a fundamental change in the character of some of the most deprived areas of the Borough. Proposals for new development will be brought forward with the assistance of the preferred private developer and Registered Social Landlords and will be integrated with the Council's Local Development Framework, as either Supplementary Planning Documents or Development Plan Documents. Residential redevelopment should be in conformity with Policy HS4 of the Unitary Development Plan, whilst mixed use development incorporating retail use will be considered against retail policy including Policy SH4 of the Unitary Development Plan. Other uses will be considered against UDP Policy HS15.

## **16.0 ANTI – POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 None arising from this report.

## **17.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 None arising from this report.

## **18.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

18.1 The HMRI areas are within the following Wards: Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere; Rock Ferry, Seacombe; Liscard, Cloughton, Oxtan and Bromborough.

## **19.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

19.1 There will be Human Rights implications under Article 8 and Article 1 of the first protocol, both of which concern the protection of private property. Article 8 of the convention on Human Rights requires a Local Authority to respect a person's home. A Local Authority may only affect a person's right to respect for his home if it is necessary, e.g. in the interests of economic wellbeing, for the prevention of crime or the protection of health.

Having access to a decent home is a basic human right to which HMRI contributes significantly.

## 20.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

20.1 North Birkenhead Framework for Regeneration, Tranmere (Church Road) Masterplan, Rock Ferry (Fiveways) Masterplan, Strategy for Inner Wirral 2004-14, Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme 2008-11.

## 21.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

21.1 Members note the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral in the period April 2008 to Mar 2009.

Alan Stennard  
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Lynn Ireland, HMRI Policy and Performance Manager who can be contacted on 691 8102.



WIRRAL COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE / DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

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

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This progress report, updates Members on the activities of the Destination Marketing Office (DMO), and highlights the support being provided to Wirral's business community, to help them through the current national economic downturn. The Destination Marketing Implementation Plan, in place to help these same businesses, has the full support of the Wirral Tourism Business Network; links directly to the annual Destination Management Plan delivered by The Mersey Partnership (ie Merseyside's Tourism Board), and follows the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) strategy objectives. This strategic approach has been taken to market Wirral Peninsula's tourism and investment offer more effectively, help local businesses increase trade by attracting more spend and visitors to the Borough, and ultimately encourage long-term economic sustainability. Members are requested to note and support the request to Cabinet, to underwrite £300,000 of European Regional Development Funds, from the Council's Matched Funding Budget and Reserve, so that the Wirral element of the "Partners for Tourism Growth" project (ie July 2009 to June 2012) can be delivered successfully.

#### **1. Wirral Tourism Business Network (WTBN)**

The Council's DMO continues to support the activities of the WTBN, which is made up of over 250 stakeholders, and is currently assisting a number of individual tourism businesses with marketing, training and funding opportunities. This is being delivered in partnership with the Council's Strategic Development Division, The Mersey Partnership (TMP) and the Mersey Rural Leader (ie a new and active partnership supporting businesses within the rural economy).

Members are asked to note that the DMO has been working closely with TMP, and the other Merseyside boroughs, to develop a joint three-year "Partners for Tourism Growth" project for European funds (ie July 2009 to June 2012), to help businesses through the current national economic downturn. The Wirral element of the project, now secured from the NWDA's operational programme, is comprised of three elements (ie "Play, Eat and Stay in Wirral" marketing campaigns to directly support tourism businesses, two new events and visitor research). The events are a new Wirral Golf Classic (ie a golf event specialist is currently being procured to deliver the Classic in the autumn of 2010), and a new Christmas Gourmet Fair in Port Sunlight. This will also to be delivered in 2010, by the Port Sunlight Village Trust, and the experts behind the Wirral Food and Drink Festival. If successful, all of these activities will directly help local tourism businesses better market their services to potential and existing visitors. A Cabinet report, approved on the 28 May 2009, highlights the total cost of the Wirral element of the three year project to be £600,000, of which £300,000 is European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), matched against £300,000 from the Council's existing budget (ie DMO staff time and marketing budget). Members are asked to note a further Cabinet report is currently being drafted to underwrite the total cost of the project from the Council's Matched Funding Budget and Reserve.

The WTBN is comprised of six Partnerships including Golf, Chaired by the Royal Liverpool Golf Club Secretary, David Cromie. This new Partnership is helping to strengthen the existing WTBN, which includes the accommodation, attractions, coast, history and heritage, and quality food sectors, as well as help steer the planned Wirral Golf Classic mentioned above. In addition, the WTBN received a record 11 nominations at this year's sub-regional TMP Tourism Awards gala at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. The Network and Partnerships are currently free to join; however this is currently being evaluated. All are in place to increase visitors and related spend in the Borough.

## **2. Intelligence Led**

### Investment Market Intelligence and Campaign Activity

Market research experts, Ipsos MORI have been procured to undertake a robust research study throughout the North West of England, to help inform the Wirral Investment Strategy and related marketing campaigns. The research study is designed to measure levels of awareness of Wirral and its key developments; assess effectiveness of current information channels; investigate strengths and weaknesses of Wirral as a business location, and establish which sectors/regions are priorities for future promotion. The research is now complete and is currently being evaluated by both the Strategic Development Division and the DMO. Once findings and conclusions have been agreed and presented to Members and relevant partners/stakeholders, they will inform all future investment marketing, to target sectors/regions more efficiently and effectively, so encouraging more businesses to develop in or relocate to Wirral.

### Tourism Market Intelligence and Campaign Activity

Following Cabinet approval on the 19 March 2009, a very successful "call for action" spring marketing campaign (ie "What are you doing this weekend?") was advertised in the quality, northwest press including The Guardian, Independent and Observer travel supplements; BBC Country File magazine; Good Travel Guide and, Cheshire and Lancashire Life magazines. Also, a select number of outdoor northwest rail poster sites and Manchester city centre buses were targeted to take advantage of the high commuter passenger footfall. Informed by VisitBritain's national research, highlighting the increase in domestic holidaying, while reflecting the current economic downturn, the campaign steered visitors to a high-end competition for a free weekend in Wirral on [www.visitwirral.com/freeweekend](http://www.visitwirral.com/freeweekend). The campaign has generated almost 300 entrants to the competition and will be drawn shortly. It includes an exclusive tour of Wirral's beautiful coast; an indulgent afternoon tea at Taste England's Northwest winning, Roses Tea Room in Heswall; a delicious dinner at last year's Chef Shine winner, The Cowshed restaurant in The Wheatsheaf Inn, Raby; and a two night bed and breakfast stay at the luxurious 5 star Mere Brook House in Thornton Hough, all kindly donated by our WTBN partners. Plans for next year's campaign, funded through European funds, are currently in development.

### Visitor Research

A full existing and potential visitor research study, to mirror the work done in 2006 by Ipsos MORI, and evaluate the proposed Wirral Peninsula "Play, Eat and Stay" marketing communications and activity (see 1.2), is planned throughout 2011. In addition, Officers from the DMO and Cultural Services are currently working together, to identify funding for a research project at Wirral Country Park, to help understand visitor needs and steer future development of the proposed Visitor Centre at Thurstaston.

## **3. Year of the Environment - European Capital of Culture Legacy**

Following the massive success of the Liverpool City Region's European Capital of Culture last year - 2009 is designated Year of the Environment. The DMO have taken advantage of this opportunity by

launching four new Walk and Cycle Trails (ie north, south, east and west), and a planned Nature Trail, to be launched later in the autumn. These have been developed in conjunction with Officers from Cultural and Technical Services, and with grant support from the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park. The Walk and Cycle Trails were recently promoted through a northwest wide newspaper competition, with Hillbark Hotel (ie recently awarded the Gold Standard by VisitBritain) kindly donating a two night bed and breakfast stay. This has already generated over 300 entries.

A small grant has also been secured, to promote a Wirral element of the wider Liverpool City Region legacy project, called “Go Penguins”. The grant will be matched with funds from Wirral’s attractions, to purchase replica penguins (ie individually designed and so following the “Superlambanana” model), so forming a unique trail that will be promoted through the press and other marketing literature. The trail is sure to be of interest to visitors both sides of the River Mersey and will run from December 2009 through to January 2010.

Also, a number of key environmentally aware events were given a unique platform this year by helping to highlight the “green message”. These included the annual Coastal Walk, the International Kite Festival in New Brighton, as well as the Food and Drink Festival at Claremont Farm, Bebington and the RNL Open Day in Hoylake.

#### **4. Fantastic Food**

This year there are six Wirral Chef Shine evenings, taking place each month from May, in local restaurants. The theme is “home-grown”, focusing on seasonal and locally produced ingredients, and also linking to the Liverpool City Region’s Year of the Environment. Award winning, renowned chef Brian Mellor, had the difficult task of choosing the six finalists from the 13 nominations submitted. The finalists prepare a three-course meal, using locally sourced produce, at a very competitive cost of £14.95. Diners vote on quality, presentation, menu balance, etc, with the highest scoring being awarded Chef of the Year at this year’s Wirral Tourism Awards for Excellence in November.

As well as the “What are you doing this weekend?” campaign already mentioned (see 2.2.1), the DMO have put together a number of web-based competitions, in the local/regional press, to drive existing and potential visitors to Wirral’s eateries and accommodation. These have included Mother’s Day, Easter Break, Father’s Day, Summer Holidays, with Halloween, Bonfire Night and Christmas competitions planned for later in the year. All prizes have been kindly donated by Wirral’s tourism businesses, and the competitions themselves are put together by the DMO and promoted through [www.vistwirral.com](http://www.vistwirral.com), to help Wirral’s stakeholders during the current economic slump.

In addition, the DMO worked with personnel from Wirral Farmers’ Market and Claremont Farm, to help launch this year’s Wirral Food and Drink Festival. At the time of this report being written, this year’s Festival is yet to take place, however Members will recall it attracted over 28,000 visitors from around the northwest last year. An Asparagus Celebration took place this May, at the award winning Hillbark Hotel in Royden Park, attracting positive northwest wide media coverage. Wirral’s quality food offer directly links into TMP’s, and Visit Chester and Cheshire’s (VCC) Destination Management Plans, as a vital aspect of the tourism experience. It also mirrors a key NWDA priority to develop the regional offer, and with this in mind, the Wirral Year of Food is currently being planned by the DMO and partners for 2010, including an all-new Christmas Gourmet Fair in Port Sunlight (see 1.2).

#### **5. Encouraging Business Tourism**

The WTBN Stakeholder Update event took place in July at the new Leverhulme Hotel and Spa in Port Sunlight. Over 50 representatives from Wirral’s tourism business community attended and the

updates are now held twice a year to stimulate discussion and feedback on planned and live tourism projects.

In addition, the WTBN Partnerships have recently started a process of combining their meetings (eg Food and Accommodation) to great effect, culminating in new business opportunities and management efficiency. The DMO are also supporting a number of tourism businesses during the current financial crisis through the planned activities mentioned (see 1.2).

Officers from the Corporate Services Department have met with their counterparts, from Cheshire West and Chester, to explore mutually beneficial strategic develop and visitor economy opportunities. This was seen as an important step to working more closely with our neighbours beyond the Liverpool City Region. In addition, DMO Officers continue to develop a productive working relationship with Visit Chester and Cheshire, including shared campaign intelligence, complementary links on tourism-dedicated websites and developing hotel and spa packages. Officers also continue to work with the Liverpool Film Office, to attract film crews, production companies and directors, and so raise the positive media perception of Wirral as an attractive filming location.

## **6. Make It Easy**

The following initiatives aim to better inform Wirral visitors, stakeholders and partners (internal and external) and so improve business/customer connectivity:

[www.visitwirral.com](http://www.visitwirral.com)

After a successful re-launch of visitwirral, the DMO has seen a significant increase of people visiting the site, and indeed this August saw almost 19,000 visits against 11,500 visits in August 2008 (ie a 65% increase). The site has been actively promoted through the “What are you doing this weekend?” spring marketing campaign, which is a short break led competition as already mentioned, all generously donated by Wirral’s tourism sector. The most popular pages are “Restaurant of the Month”, “Gastro-pubs” and “Activities”, and it is this last section that hosts the newly launched Walk and Cycle Trails, which visitors can download.

### Tourism Signage and Interpretation

A bid for NWDA funds is currently being developed for a project to update Wirral’s coastal signage. If successful, the project aims to help raise the positive profile of the coast, safely inform and disperse existing and new visitors/residents, and encourage visitor spend in the Borough. The scheme mirrors all the necessary Health and Safety criteria, incorporates the new Wirral Peninsula branding, and naturally links to the North West Coastal Trail initiative, currently being led by the NWDA.

Officers are also working with Technical Services Department colleagues to update existing and develop new “brown” tourism signage. Phase 1 work has already been delivered in Port Sunlight, Woodside, Seacombe and New Brighton, and Phase 2 is currently being developed to continue the project throughout the Borough, budgets allowing.

### Promotional Literature

A Wirral Peninsula branded tourism guide is also currently in production and new images have also been commissioned. The guide will be launched in the New Year, to link with the “Play, Eat and Stay in Wirral” marketing campaign, and highlight Wirral’s full tourism offer through themed sections (eg attractions, food, accommodation, etc).

To actively promote the Wirral Year of Food, a new food guide, "Taste of Wirral 2010" (part sponsored by The Grange and Pyramids shopping centres), is also currently in production. It will build on the success of the past Gourmet Trails, however it will feature more food related events, workshops and themed activities; more places to eat; more food producers, and hence stimulate more business for the whole of Wirral's food sector.

Following the successful bid for funds, from the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park programme, a sub-group of the Wirral Coast Partnership has been brought together to project manage the development and delivery of the all-new Wirral Nature Trail leaflet. Work is well underway and it is hoped that the Trail will be in circulation by this autumn.

This year's new Attractions leaflet has now been produced, and the DMO has been instrumental in helping the Partnership improve the document by including discount vouchers and a competition, kindly donated by the new Leverhulme Hotel and Spa in Port Sunlight village. This year it also includes two new members ie the Floral Pavilion Theatre and Conference Centre, and Wirral Archives.

#### Exhibitions, Familiarisation Visits and Itineraries

Officers from the DMO attended the two-day "Kids Fun Ideas Show" at the Manchester Central Convention Complex on the 27 and 28 June. The event was extremely well attended last year with huge amounts of interest shown about Wirral. In addition, the team are exploring the opportunity of bringing over Norfolk Line ferry staff, based in Belfast and Dublin, as well as developing a more personalised visit for TMP managerial staff. Familiarisation Visits give Wirral tourism businesses the opportunity to raise their profile. Feedback from those visiting, and those Wirral businesses who participated, has been excellent.

The DMO also hosted visits from "Coast" and "Food and Travel" magazines. The travel journalist from the latter visited several key areas of Wirral's food offer including Michelin rated, Restaurant Fraiche in Oxtou, and Claremont Kitchen at Claremont Farm, Bebington, and positive articles have subsequently resulted. More press visits are planned for October.

#### Tourism Talk e-newsletter

The next edition is currently in development and the DMO is always looking at different ways to refresh the newsletter including more stakeholder involvement. Tourism Talk has been developed to better engage partners and stakeholders, on current activities and developments, and allows for regular feedback.

### **7. Excellent Events**

The majority of the Core Events programme this year has now been delivered including the Wirral Show, International Kite Festival in New Brighton, Chef Shine at various Wirral venues (see 4.1) and Wirral Food and Drink Festival, with the Wirral Tourism Awards for Excellence at Thornton Hall Hotel planned for November. Unfortunately, the poor weather conditions had a severe impact on visitors to the International Kite Festival, therefore having a negative impact on visitor spend also.

Following the agreement of the Supported Events Panel in December 2008, grant support has now been allocated, to this year's select programme of Supported Community-led Events. These events are the Hoylake RNLi Open Day, Coastal Walk, Secret Gardens of Oxtou, Folk on the Coast and Port Sunlight Festivals, Wirral Egg Run, Wallasey Motor and Historic Vehicle Rallies. The Supported Events Panel includes representatives from the three main political parties and Officers from Cultural Services and the Tourism and Marketing Division. Decisions are made on visitor research conducted by TMP's England's Northwest Research Agency and advice from the division.

In addition to the Supported Events Panel, the Wirral Events Advisory Group, administered by the DMO and including Officers from Corporate Services; HR, Law and Asset Management; Regeneration and Technical Services, advises and supports various community groups, to develop and deliver their own activities and events in a safe and sustainable way.

## **8. Superb Shopping**

A staffed Information Point, within The Pyramids shopping centre in Birkenhead, has now been open for almost one year, and they have reported over 1,000 visitors per week, with a surprising number coming from outside the area. The Pyramids are now undertaking visitor research, the results of which will be shared with the DMO, who are in regular contact and continue to replenish tourism literature supplies.

## **9. Financial implications**

There are no additional financial implications to the Council arising out of this update report.

## **10. Staffing implications**

There are no additional staffing implications arising out of this report.

## **11. Equal Opportunities implications**

The target group for the Implementation Plan is all visitors and businesses, and is fully inclusive. The Destination Marketing Office will endeavour that all Council core events and attractions are accessible to everyone regardless of age, ability, and social and/or ethnic background. A number of events/activities will be offered free of charge, however where a charge is necessitated to help sustain the activity, concessions will be made available.

In terms of those with physical disabilities, and accessing Council events and related activities, provision will be made available wherever possible. The Council is committed to being an equal opportunities service provider, so all Council visitor attractions, and public buildings are accessible, or are reviewing and improving their accessibility requirements. This relates directly to the duties placed upon it, by the Disability Discrimination Act 2004, and is provided in conjunction with the Council's Access Officer.

## **12. Community Safety implications**

All events are evaluated by the Wirral Events Advisory Group, which includes Merseyside Police and, Merseyside Fire and Ambulance Services. Public health and safety is of the highest priority and is evaluated by the Group, as well as through individual event plans, and risk assessments.

## **13. Local Agenda 21 implications**

There are no Local Agenda 21 implications arising out of this update report.

## **14. Planning implications**

There are no planning implications arising out of this update report.

## **15. Anti-poverty implications**

There are no anti-poverty implications arising out of this report.

#### **16. Human Rights implications**

There are no human rights implications arising out of this report.

#### **17. Social Inclusion implications**

The target group for the Implementation Plan is all visitors, and all Council events and activities will aim to be culturally sensitive, all embracing and fully inclusive.

#### **18. Local Member Support implications**

The Implementation Plan hopes to benefit all of Wirral by increasing businesses, visitor numbers and related spend in a sustainable way, so encouraging the regeneration of the local economy.

#### **19. Background Papers**

The Destination Marketing Office, within the Tourism and Marketing Division, holds all background papers in relation to this update report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

- i) Note and support the request to Cabinet (as detailed in 1.2 above) to underwrite the £300,000 of European Regional Development Funds, from the Council's Matched Funding Budget and Reserve, so that the Wirral element of the "Partners for Tourism Growth" project (ie July 2009 to June 2012) can be delivered successfully despite the current economic crisis.
- ii) Note and support the contents of this progress report.

#### **J. WILKIE**

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

*This report has been prepared by Emma Degg, Head of Tourism and Marketing, within the Corporate Services Department, and she can be contacted on 691 8688.*

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

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

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### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The purpose of this report is:

- to advise Members of the Director of Regeneration's decision, under delegated authority, to accept the tender by Energy Projects Plus to deliver the two main fuel poverty prevention initiatives in Wirral; and
- to seek Member's 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.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Wirral Council has a strong track record of providing affordable warmth and energy efficiency solutions for residents in the Borough. The first Wirral Affordable Warmth Strategy was published in 2004 and was reviewed in 2008, committing the Council to assist in the eradication of fuel poverty in line with Government targets. The Strategy provides a framework and direction for the Council and its partners until 2010 and has identified the need to continue the provision of fuel poverty prevention initiatives and to promote them to households in an area-based, co-ordinated manner. To this end, suppliers were sought who could provide either one or both of the following initiatives, for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 (with the option to extend for a further 2 years to be renewed annually):

- a) The management and facilitation of energy efficiency grants for Wirral private sector households within the Housing Market Renewal Initiative area (known as "CosyHomes");
- b) The delivery of a programme to raise awareness amongst householders of fuel poverty alleviation measures and the management of referrals throughout the Borough (known as "Warmer Wirral"), concentrating activity in areas of higher than average fuel poverty.

2.2 In addition to the two initiatives above, "Warm Streets" has been developed and proposes to increase installations of cavity wall and loft insulation at no cost to the Council, for Wards where fuel poverty is below average but where there is still a need to improve energy efficiency levels and support households in doing so.

2.3 The 2008 Wirral Private Sector Stock Condition & Home Energy Survey identified that 57% of homes with cavity walls are uninsulated, offering huge potential for carbon dioxide savings. The survey has also revealed that there are still 37% of homes with loft insulation at a thickness of 100mm or less, which is an improvement on the 2003 survey

figure of 68%, but again also offers potential for CO<sub>2</sub> savings by topping up to the current recommended thickness of 270mm.

- 2.4 “Warm Streets” will involve the Council partnering with Apex Carbon Solutions who will market the best available price for insulation to households, door-to-door, from a range of installers. The initiative will target areas with a high percentage of cavity walls and will also target wards containing pockets of high percentages of properties failing the Decent Homes Standard identified through the 2008 Private Sector Stock Condition & Home Energy Survey.
- 2.5 The delivery of the two fuel poverty prevention initiatives and “Warm Streets” will assist Wirral in meeting its Decent Homes targets under the Local Area Agreement as well as making a positive contribution to National Indicators 186 (CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita) and 187 (fuel poverty).

### 3.0 DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS OF “COSYHOMES” AND “WARMER WIRRAL”

#### 3.1 Cosy Homes

3.1.1 Suppliers were sought to manage and facilitate energy efficiency grants to private sector dwellings within the boundary of the Wirral Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) area. At present through HMRI, there is £65,000 per financial year available to fund heating improvements, £45,000 per financial year for solar water heating systems and £15,000 per financial year to fund insulation improvements over the 20 month period of the contract.

3.1.2 Households in the HMRI area have been able to receive insulation grants since 2004 with heating grants provided from 2006 to support vulnerable households which didn't qualify for the Government's Warm Front initiative or which required a Warm Front customer contribution. Energy Projects Plus managed these grants on behalf of the Council up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 and was previously appointed on a “sole supplier” basis due to their role of sole operator of Merseyside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. The Centre recently ceased to exist, when Energy Projects Plus won the contract to operate the new Energy Saving Trust advice centre (ESTac) as a separate entity within the charity. Energy Projects Plus was required to separate its other activity and resources, especially concerning fuel poverty prevention, from the work of the ESTac, thereby opening up competition from other providers of fuel poverty prevention work. A tender process was therefore required.

3.1.3 The installation of solar water heating systems is a new addition to the project and will be available to be installed in homes within an area of north Birkenhead known as “The Triangles”, as previously reported to Cabinet (8<sup>th</sup> September 2004) as part of the group repair improvement programme.

3.1.4 The supplier will provide a customer-focused service for each of the three improvement programmes (insulation, heating and solar water heating) and it is intended they will carry out the following for all three aspects:

- the selection of installer partners on a best value basis;
- the generation of external funding to maximise the funding provided from the Council, for example from the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target and the Government's Warm Front initiative;
- the promotion and marketing of grants to householders and co-ordination of this activity with the Warmer Wirral Initiative ensuring good referral links. The supplier will also keep the Council informed of marketing activity;
- the creation of a system to ensure all households applying for a grant are referred for tailored advice to the Energy Saving Trust advice centre;

- the creation of a system to ensure that installations are completed on time to agreed customer service standards and agreed timelines for installations;
- the handling of customer enquiries and complaints and the provision of post-installation support;
- the management of payments to Warm Front for customer contributions, the payment of installers upon satisfactory completion of works and the inspection of a sample of installations; and
- the provision of quarterly monitoring and end-of-year progress reports to the Council in an agreed format and the meeting of agreed outputs.

3.1.5 Suppliers wishing to provide submissions for the contract were required to complete method statements on all the above points as part of the procurement process.

## 3.2 **Warmer Wirral**

3.2.1 The Council has also sought a supplier through this process to lead an awareness raising programme of fuel poverty alleviation assistance in tandem with the management of referrals to partner agencies to assist fuel poor households. At present, £75,000 is available over the 20 month period (1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010) to deliver Warmer Wirral, which includes any management costs from the Wirral Energy Fund.

3.2.2 It is intended the supplier will carry out:

- the co-ordination of an area-based approach to tackle fuel poverty in areas pre-determined by the Council, based on higher than average levels of fuel poverty;
- the provision of house-to-house, face-to-face assessment of need to reduce the effects of fuel poverty on the household and the management of onward referrals to appropriate agencies and initiatives, for example:
  - Energy Saving Trust advice centre for tailored advice and referrals into energy efficiency grants and support including Warm Front
  - npower Health Through Warmth
  - Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service for Fire Safety Checks
  - Benefit entitlement checks
  - Energy tariff advice
- where needed, especially in the case of more vulnerable clients, the supplier will also 'hand-hold' clients through the referral process and installation of energy efficiency and heating measures;
- the marketing and promotion of Warmer Wirral;
- talks to communities on affordable warmth initiatives (a minimum of 10 talks) and attendance at community events (a minimum of 10 events) with staffed display stands and information leaflets;
- the training of front-line staff within organisations, including the Council, that may encounter fuel poor households, to inform them of the assistance available and agencies to refer to (a minimum of 80 staff trained); and
- the provision of the Council with 6-monthly and end-of-year progress reports in an agreed format as part of the procurement process.

3.2.3 Suppliers wishing to provide submissions for the contract were required to complete method statements on all the above points.

#### **4.0 PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND TENDER EVALUATION FOR COSY HOMES AND WARMER WIRRAL**

- 4.1 The Council's Corporate Procurement Team led the procurement process for CosyHomes and Warmer Wirral. An OJEU Notice in two lots (to deliver one or both initiatives) was issued on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and at the same time potential suppliers were e-mailed to inform them of the Notice, including all members of Wirral Voluntary & Community Sector Network. By the closing date on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009, there had been 41 expressions of interest. Subsequently 3 organisations submitted quotation documents to deliver just the CosyHomes Grants and 4 organisations submitted documents to deliver both CosyHomes and Warmer Wirral.
- 4.2 The evaluation panel, consisting of 2 officers from the Housing Strategy Team and 2 officers from the Procurement Team, scored the submissions based on the method statements each organisation submitted. The financial elements of the submissions were evaluated by a Group Accountant from the Finance Department. All scores were entered into the Public Sector Quality Price Model and weighted accordingly. The quality: price ratio was 80:20.
- 4.3 As Energy Projects Plus scored the highest for both lots and the tender is below £500,000, I have formally accepted this tender under delegated authority. The contract began on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 and will run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 (with the option to extend for a further 2 years to be renewed annually). Reports on progress under the contract will be made annually to Members on the Virtual Committee within update reports on the progress of the Wirral Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- 4.4 Energy Projects Plus is a Wallasey-based charitable organisation that has managed the delivery of energy efficiency grants on behalf of local authorities for over 10 years and has delivered fuel poverty awareness-raising initiatives for over 14 years. They have delivered CosyHomes on behalf of Wirral Council since 2004 and the Council had a Service Level Agreement with their former Energy Efficiency Advice Centre since 2001. They now operate the Merseyside & Cheshire Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre under contract.

#### **5.0 WARM STREETS**

- 5.1 The Council has been approached by several organisations, including an energy company, insulation companies and home energy project management companies to seek endorsement of their own home insulation initiatives. Officers have therefore carried out a desk-top exercise to select one partner organisation to promote competitively priced insulation on a door-to-door basis in areas with a large potential for uptake of cavity wall insulation. The organisations usually work solely within the home energy efficiency field and are able to offer the promotion service at no cost to local authorities due to the referral fees surveyors receive from the insulation or energy companies. The requirements of the Council in selecting a partner include:
- ensuring the organisation is independent of any one insulation company or energy company;
  - the ability to provide competitive prices for different house-types where the householder is required to contribute to funding;
  - having excellent customer service; and
  - working with installation partners with excellent customer service and with a presence in the North West.

- 5.2 It is recommended that the Council partner with Apex Carbon Solutions Ltd (marketed as Home Carbon Savers), who have previously worked with the Council on a similar initiative under the Eon “HeatStreets” banner (approved by Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003) which has now ended. They are currently working with a range of other local authorities to deliver “Warm Streets”, including Newark & Sherwood (Beacon Council for Tackling Fuel Poverty), Rossendale, Fylde and Chichester. Apex have a strong track record in delivering outputs and under “HeatStreets” in Wirral during 2008 delivered over 800 energy efficiency measures. The new “Warm Streets” would offer a continuation of this approach to delivering CO<sub>2</sub> savings in Wirral households. Apex provides Wirral-based surveyors, offering local employment opportunities and good local knowledge, as well as a quick response to any issues that may arise.
- 5.3 The offer for households under “Warm Streets” is based upon criteria set by OFGEM (the gas and electricity markets regulator) and is outside the control of the Council, Apex and the energy and insulation companies. That offer is as follows for:
- **“Priority Group” households** – for householders aged 70 or over or in receipt of a qualifying benefit<sup>1</sup>, cavity wall insulation and loft insulation (where there is currently less than 60mm thickness) is provided free-of-charge;
  - **“Able-to-Pay” households** – all other private sector householders will be offered discounted cavity wall insulation and loft insulation (where the current thickness is less than 100mm). Prices vary over time depending on the subsidies offered through the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) funding from the energy companies. Apex will match the householder with the most competitive price for their house-type from the installers they work with. The current best offer for cavity wall insulation is £99 across all house-types.
- 5.4 Apex will market the offer in the first instance through a hand-delivered letter on Council-headed paper which will explain the initiative, state that surveyors will be in the area for the next few days and will offer a freephone number to book a survey appointment. The letter will be followed a few days later by door-knocking to carry out surveys, with calling cards left if there is no response. The surveyors will carry ID and an authorisation letter from the Council and present it to all householders they speak to. In addition to the technical survey, the surveyor will also complete an Energy Saving Trust advice centre questionnaire with the householder which will generate an advice report and offer other grants that the householder may benefit from, such as Warm Front if appropriate for heating improvements. The questionnaire will also generate an energy efficiency (“SAP”) rating for the Council which will inform future intervention activity.
- 5.5 Following a customer enquiry to the freephone number or a positive response on the door-step, a technical survey will be carried out within 5 working days and works carried out within a further 6 weeks. Customer satisfaction checks are carried out on a minimum of 20% of households and technical inspections carried out on 5% of properties; the results of these will be given to the Council. Council officers will also monitor any queries and complaints which are reported to the Council and they will be dealt with as per Apex’s and the Council’s customer service commitments. The Council reserves the right to withdraw support for the initiative at any time.

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<sup>1</sup> The qualifying benefits are Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit (both where household income is £15,592 per annum), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Industrial Injuries Benefit or War Disablement Pension (both must include Constant Attendance Allowance). Page 33

5.6 The partnership with Apex will generate £425,000 worth of funding from the energy companies, contributions worth £400,000 from householders, will install approximately 2500 measures and will save around 1,875 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year by March 2010.

## 6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Energy Projects Plus' price for delivering the CosyHomes initiative is £22,200 which will be funded from the Housing Market Renewal Initiative Energy Efficiency Pot. Their price for delivering Warmer Wirral is £75,000 which will be funded from the Wirral Energy Fund (this fund was established using income received from Scottish Power prior to Stock Transfer, from the change of energy supplier for void properties, and will be fully spent following the 20 month contract). Funding to continue both initiatives beyond March 2011 will need to be sought in 2010.

6.2 There is no cost to the Council for the delivery of the Warm Streets initiative.

## 7.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Council will monitor and review performance of this initiative using existing resources.

## 8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Fuel poverty is disproportionately suffered by the older and vulnerable groups in society.

## 9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Community Safety Team will be kept informed of door-knocking activity and will be provided with the identification of the staff involved.

## 10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Affordable warmth initiatives aim to reduce fuel poverty and assist those households considered to be most vulnerable. There is also a CO<sub>2</sub> saving associated with the installation of energy efficiency measures.

## 11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

## 12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Wirral Affordable Warmth Strategy aims to reduce fuel poverty and therefore impacts upon the wider poverty agenda.

## 13.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Affordable Warmth initiatives target those groups that potentially may otherwise not access advice on energy efficiency, benefit entitlement and changing energy suppliers.

## 14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 **Cosy Homes** – operates throughout the HMRI area which is within the following Wards: Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere; Rock Ferry; Seacombe; Liscard; Claughton; Oxton; and Bromborough.

- 14.2 **Warmer Wirral** – targets areas of higher than average levels of fuel poverty including the wards of the HMRI area (as above) and also parts of New Brighton, Leasowe & Moreton East, Upton, Prenton and Eastham.
- 14.3 **Warm Streets** – will target areas of Moreton West & Saughall Massie, Hoylake & Meols, West Kirby & Thurstaston, Greasby, Frankby & Irby, Pensby & Thingwall, Heswall, Clatterbridge, Bromborough, Bebington and Wallasey.
- 15.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 Cabinet Report, “Proposed Triangles Group Repair Scheme, Birkenhead”, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004, Item 11.
- 15.2 Public Sector Quality Price Model, accepted under delegated authority.
- 15.3 “Energy Efficiency in Private Homes – Wirral Council”, report by Apex Carbon Solutions Ltd, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009.
- 16.0 **RECOMMENDATION**
- 16.1 That Members note the appointment, through delegated authority, of a delivery partner for “CosyHomes” and “Warmer Wirral”.

Alan Stennard  
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Ed Kingsley who can be contacted on 691 8243.

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