

CABINET

Wednesday, 10 December 2008

Present: Councillor S Foulkes (Chair)

Councillors S Holbrook M McLaughlin
G Davies R Moon
P Davies J Quinn
G Gardiner J Stapleton
S Kelly

In attendance: Councillor G Watt

284 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2008 had been printed and published.

Resolved - That the minutes be approved and adopted.

285 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

The following declarations were made:

Councillor Simon Holbrook – a personal interest in Minute 303 (Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document – Spatial Strategy and Sites Report – Wirral Response) due to his employment;

Councillor Phil Davies – a personal interest in Minute 305 (Working Wirral – Working Neighbourhoods Fund) due to his appointment as non-executive director of Wirral PCT;

Councillor Gill Gardiner – a personal interest in Minute 303 (Joint Merseyside waste development plan document - spatial strategy and sites report - Wirral response) due to her previous involvement in the matter and left the room whilst the matter was considered;

Councillor Jean Quinn – a personal interest in Minute 303 (Joint Merseyside waste development plan document - spatial strategy and sites report - Wirral response) due to her previous involvement in the matter and left the room whilst the matter was considered; and

Councillor Moira McLaughlin – a personal interest in Minute 311 (Initial update on actions taken following the case of Baby P in Haringey) due to her daughter's employment.

286 **EMERGENCY MOTION**

The Leader of Council moved an urgent motion, duly seconded and it was -

Resolved: That

(1) Cabinet notes that a Special Meeting of the Cultural Services and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Strategic Asset Review has been called by three members of that committee for tonight and that the date clashes with tonight's previously scheduled Cabinet meeting; and

(2) the Chair has not asked any Cabinet members to attend the meeting, but should the presence of any Cabinet member be required during the course of the meeting, Cabinet wishes to make it clear that they will temporarily adjourn the Cabinet meeting in order to facilitate the fullest possible debate at the Scrutiny Committee with Cabinet members present to answer questions should this be required at any point.

287 **PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES- OUTSOURCING CARE SERVICES, FEE LEVELS FOR RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING HOMES AND A NEW CONTRACT FOR SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES**

Members were informed that delivering the Transformation of Adult Social Services was critical to the Council's strategic objective: 'To improve health and wellbeing for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society'. In particular the programme gave focus to the improvement priority of 'promoting greater independence and choice'. That approach was central to the personalisation of Adult Social Care Services. The Director of Adult Social Services outlined progress, in particular with regard to Cabinet's decision of 6th November to explore the outsourcing of care services.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Inclusion welcomed the report.

Resolved - That

(1) the progress made with the transformation of Adult Social Services be noted

(2) a further report in May 2009 be received outlining details of the outsourcing project, with details of proposals and time scales for implementation;

(3) amendments be made to the contract for residential and Nursing home fees and a new contract introduced from 1st April or as soon to that date

as possible, the new fee rate to be closer to the regional average and affordable within a sustainable budget for DASS;

- (4) the fair price produced by use of a cost of care model for supported living services be implemented from 1st April 2009 through the introduction of a new contract; and
- (5) a further report be brought to the Cabinet in January 2009 on the progress of the negotiations with the providers of residential and nursing home care and of supported living services so that a decision can be made whether or not the new contracts can be introduced by agreement or by the termination by the Council of existing contracts.

WEST KIRBY REGENERATION - THE SAIL PROJECT

At the request of the Chair, the Head of Legal and Member Services explained why it was recommended that the report be considered in the absence of the press and public as an exempt item.

The Chair indicated that, prior to considering the recommendation to exclude the press and public, he would welcome a contribution from a spokesperson of those members of the public in attendance.

Elizabeth Davy, Chair of Hoylake and District Civic Society addressed the Cabinet.

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor Geoffrey Watt addressed the Cabinet.

288 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

289 WEST KIRBY REGENERATION - THE SAIL PROJECT

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services provided an update to members on progress with the Sail Project, further to the appointment of developers Carpenter Investments Ltd. on a 12 month lock-out basis in January 2008. The report summarised the developer's progress and went on to seek members' approval for an extension to the lock-out agreement in order for Carpenter Investments to provide further details in relation to a revised scheme proposal.

Resolved -That

- (1) a three month extension be approved from the current expiry date to the lock-out agreement with Carpenter Investments in order that the

Developer can provide further details and to allow officers sufficient time to evaluate the information; and

- (2) the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be authorised to complete the legal documentation required to extend the existing agreement for that period.**

MATTERS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

290 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Director of Finance summarised the process used to develop the Corporate Risk Register and confirmed the outcome of the recent review undertaken by Chief Officers. A draft of the revised Register was appended and the Cabinet was invited to consider and comment upon its contents.

Resolved - That

- (1) the draft Corporate Risk Register be noted;**
- (2) a full update to the Register be provided within six months; and**
- (3) progress in managing the corporate risks continue to be included in the quarterly Financial and Performance Monitoring Summary reports.**

291 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES SECURITY POLICY

The Director of Finance informed Members of proposed amendments to the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Security Policy last presented to Cabinet on 1 December 2005.

Members were requested to agree the Information and Communications Technology Security Policy as amended.

Resolved - That the amended Information and Communications Technology Security Policy be agreed

292 PRINT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

The Director of Finance recommended to Members the need for a Deputy Print Manager and for additional print management software.

Resolved - That

- (1) the establishment of the post of Deputy Print Manager be recommended to the Employment and Appointments Committee; and**
- (2) additional print management software be purchased at a cost of up to £30,000 to be financed from the printing reserve.**

293 **BALANCE SHEET MANAGEMENT- REVIEW OF BALANCES INCLUDING PROVISIONS AND RESERVES**

The Director of Finance presented the mid-year review of the amounts held in balances, provisions and reserves. His report recommended the release of those provisions and reserves no longer required to general balances.

Resolved - That

- (1) **the Regeneration provisions and reserves totalling £230,000 identified as no longer being required be used to partially offset the projected overspending in 2008-09; and**
- (2) **the other reserves totalling £130,000 identified as no longer being required be returned to General Fund Balances.**

294 **CHANGE PROGRAMME**

The Director of Finance presented an update on the change programme agreed by the Cabinet on 7 February 2008.

His report identified four key areas for change, culled from over one hundred separate projects considered by Corporate Improvement Group (CIG), and highlighted progress that could be achieved by April 2012.

The report detailed where potential savings had been identified from individual projects and noted further that clear management would be essential in driving the programme to achieve efficiencies and improve the processes which underpin how the Council operates.

Members were asked to note progress on the Change Programme and approve the Change Programme 2009/2012.

The Leader of the Council requested that the savings and projections be itemised and followed through to implementation.

Resolved - That

- (1) **the progress on the Change Programme 2008-09 be noted; and**
- (2) **the Change Programme 2009-12 be approved**

295 **PROJECTED BUDGETS 2009-2011**

At the request of the Leader of the Council, the Director of Finance updated the Cabinet on the position regarding the Icelandic Bank and the letting of energy contracts.

The Director of Finance presented the projected budgets for 2009-2011 to coincide with the period of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR).

The Leader of the Council moved a motion, duly seconded and it was –

Resolved - That

(1) Cabinet recognises the urgent need to ensure that Council Tax increases are kept as low as possible and therefore recommends the following savings to Council, taking into account items 6 and 25, in order to continue to narrow Wirral's budget gap and protect Wirral residents from unnecessary financial burdens.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES	
	£
Deletion of posts held vacant for more than twelve months	80,000
Cease to provide uniform grants in the light of ready availability of inexpensive e school clothing.	30,000
ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES	
Reduction in Residential and Nursing Home Fees Contract in line with Item 25	1,000,000
Review of Admin Support	100,000
HOUSING AND REGENERATION	
Increase mobile cleaning team to facilitate mobile cleaning of all toilets at regular intervals.	70,000
CORPORATE SERVICES	
Restore element of LAA reward grant to Council budget following decision of Local Area Agreement Board on November 19 th .	1,400,000
FINANCE.	
Transfer of Reserves and Provisions no longer required to the General Fund, with the proviso that £230,000 is set against the projected Housing and Regeneration overspend on Cultural Services.	360,000

(2) In order to ensure that the authority treats children of all faiths equally, the Director of Children's Services be asked to carry out a consultation exercise on changing the home to school transport policy with a view to

removing the entitlement to free travel for new pupils attending Roman Catholic schools and to report back to Cabinet on the 23rd February 2009; and

(3) Because it is considered to be in the Council's best interests to implement proposed savings as early as possible, Cabinet asks Council to approve those items which have not been considered by Scrutiny committees where there is all party support and, in so doing, to suspend paragraph 2(a) of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules and to deal with the proposals in accordance with paragraph 2(b), i.e. where there is no such agreement, absence of which should be indicated by the lodging of an objection by 10am on Friday, Council is asked to refer the relevant item to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion and subsequent referral to the next Council meeting.

296 CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FINANCING

Cabinet was provided with a draft Capital Programme for 2009/12 for consideration and referral to Council for approval. The report also included the related capital financing requirements based upon the prudential indicators that inform the Treasury Management Strategy.

Resolved - That

(1) views on the capital programme 2009/12, including the new submissions as detailed in section 7.2.1, be requested;

(2) if approved, the capital financing requirements be reflected in the Projected Budget and referred to the Council;

(3) the Prudential Indicators be noted and reported as part of the Treasury Management Strategy in March 2009; and

(4) update reports on the progress of the programme be presented in accordance with the Financial and Performance Monitoring reporting cycle.

297 PRE-BUDGET STATEMENT

The Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Pre-Budget Report on 24 November 2008 and the Director of Finance provided a summary of the key implications for local authorities.

Resolved -That support be given to the Local Government Association, in presenting the case that, as local authorities are the most efficient part of the public sector and contributing more than their fair share to savings, the increased £5 billion efficiency target should be weighted towards other parts of the public sector.

298 **PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT**

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2008/11 was announced on 6 December 2007. The Director of Finance reported that, in his statement on 26 November 2008 the Minister for Communities and Local Government confirmed that the second year of the Settlement would not change from the indicative figures already published. He also stated that it was not intended for the 2010/11 proposals to be changed.

Resolved: That

- (1) the implications of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement be noted;**
- (2) the proposed response to the consultation be endorsed.**
- (3) the Authority continues to use every opportunity to state the case for further improvement to the Provisional Settlement.**
- (4) Chief Officers continue to identify areas for efficiency that will realise financial and service benefits to the Council and the people of Wirral.**

299 **AUDIT COMMISSION - ETHICAL GOVERNANCE DIAGNOSTIC**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management brought to the Cabinet's attention the Audit Commission's Ethical Governance Diagnostic for a review of compliance with ethical issues within the Council. This matter had also been considered by the Standards Committee on 1st December 2008.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council welcomed the report and emphasised that the onus was on Cabinet Members to endorse this issue and learn from the diagnostic and ingrain its results into Council business.

The Leader of the Council moved a motion, duly seconded, and it was –

Resolved -That

- (1) the report, and the Standard's Committee resolution that officers prepare an action plan for the review, be noted;**
- (2) the Cabinet gives complete commitment to this matter and endeavours to ensure a maximum level of participation in the diagnostic exercise; and**
- (3) requests that the Leader of the Conservative Group encourages his Members to play an active role in the completion of the diagnostic.**

300 **WIRRAL'S SUPPORTED AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING STRATEGY 2008-2011**

The Director of Regeneration presented a report which sought Members' endorsement of the new Supported and Special Needs Housing Strategy 2008-2011 for Wirral and also approval of the Procurement Strategy.

Resolved – That Wirral's Supported and Special Needs Housing Strategy 2008-2011 be endorsed and the Procurement Strategy for contracts be approved.

301 **BOUNDARY WALL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – NORMAN STREET**

The Director of Regeneration sought Cabinet approval to undertake a scheme for improvements to boundary walls, railings and gates of properties numbered 21 to 123 on Norman Street, Birkenhead, as an extension to an existing contract for Group Repair Works in the area in line with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Resolved - That the contract with E J Horrocks for Phase 3 of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme be varied to include the improvement of boundary walls, gates and railings at 21 to 123 Norman Street, Birkenhead at a maximum cost of £68,200 as an extension to an existing contract in line with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

302 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR WIRRAL - ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2007/08**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services reported that Section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required the Council to submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Secretary of State by 31 December each year. The Report had to cover progress on the Council's Local Development Framework over the preceding period from 1 April to 31 March.

There was no requirement for public consultation on the content of the Annual Monitoring Report but copies of the Report had to be made available for public inspection on the Council's website.

The Director recommended that the draft Annual Monitoring Report for 2007/08, attached to the report, be agreed for submission to the Secretary of State and placed on the Council's website for public inspection.

Resolved – That

- (1) the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report for 2007/08, attached to the report, be approved for formal submission to the Secretary of State; and**
- (2) the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report for 2007/08, as submitted, be placed on the Council's website for public inspection.**

303 **JOINT MERSEYSIDE WASTE DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT - SPATIAL STRATEGY AND SITES REPORT - WIRRAL RESPONSE**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services advised members that the Council was a partner in the preparation of a Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document with the Councils for Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Halton. A Spatial Strategy and Sites Report had been published for public consultation and comments had to be submitted by 9 January 2009.

The report considered the Council's formal response to the emerging strategy, to the ten sites in Wirral which had been suggested as suitable for new waste management facilities and to the six sites that had been identified as part of a list of sites to be investigated for their potential to accommodate landfill or land-raising.

The report recommended that the suggested answers to the consultation questions, shown marked by a box and numbered under Recommendations 1 to 13, be endorsed as the Council's formal response to the Spatial Strategy and Sites Report.

An extract of a petition containing 188 signatories objecting to the designation of Irby quarry as a site for landfill was circulated to the Cabinet.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services referred to a public meeting that had been held the previous evening to discuss the matter.

The Leader of the Council referred to the consultation exercise that had been undertaken and the material available on the Council's website. He requested that consideration be given to producing a press release on this matter.

The Deputy Leader of the Council indicated that the Council was a consultee in this matter rather than the decision-maker.

Resolved - That recommendations 1 to 13 be endorsed as the Council's formal response to the Spatial Strategy and Sites Report.

304 **FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MERSEY WATERFRONT REGIONAL PARK BOARD**

The Director of Regeneration sought approval of the financial recommendations of the MWRP Board.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning Strategy enquired about the lighting of the ventilation shaft at Seacombe and it was noted that other areas of funding for this were being explored.

Resolved - That

(1) the "Quick Win" projects are approved by Cabinet so that decisions can be made before the end of December on which ones should be implemented to expend the £300,000 projected shortfall from the Riverlands Project in 2008-09;

(2) “call in” is waived to enable the timescales and expenditure profile required by the NWDA to be met and the Council be informed accordingly; and

(3) the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on behalf of the Accountable Body for the MWRP agrees the projects to be implemented with the Chair of the MWRP Board.

305 WORKING WIRRAL - WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services provided an update on the progress of the Working Wirral programme.

Resolved - That

(1) Cabinet, as accountable body, agrees the recommendations of the WEDS Partnership and approves Working Wirral expenditure for:

Arch Initiatives – Mentoring into employment project to a maximum of £179,896 for the period 2009 to 2011;

Wirral PCT – Working 4 Health project to a maximum of £561,592 for the period 2009 to 2011;

Wirral Change – BRM Employment outreach project to a maximum of £540,883 for the period 2009 to 2011.

(2) the Government’s consultation that is taking place with regard to confirmation of the allocation of Working Neighbourhoods Funds (WNF) for 2009/10 and 2010/11 be noted;

(3) the allocation of a maximum of £100,000 each year for 2009/10 and 2010/11 for marketing activity as recommended by the Investment Strategy Board be approved;

(4) WW resources be allocated to activities to support business investment and business growth outcomes to a maximum of £390,000 each year for 2009/10 and 2010/11; and

(5) the use of Working Wirral funds to a maximum of £441,324 to enable ERDF resources to be drawn down to deliver activity to increase employer engagement be agreed.

306 ELLESMERE PORT WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT BRIEF - WIRRAL COUNCIL RESPONSE.

Members were advised that Ellesmere Port and Neston Council had prepared a development brief for the redevelopment of Ellesmere Port docks, a key site in the West Cheshire New Growth Point bid and the largest potential housing site in West Cheshire. Ellesmere Port and Neston Council expected to receive a planning application for a phased housing development of up to 7,550 new dwellings, in blocks of apartments from 6 to 20 storeys and 4/5 storey double unit houses. This proposal was of importance for Wirral in its potential impact on the Wirral Waters scheme

(including cumulative transport impacts on the M53 Motorway) and in the impact of any relocated port facilities (which the brief proposed to relocate in Wirral).

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services asked Members to agree to representations seeking a limited redevelopment of the Ellesmere Port Docks being conditional on an acceptable phased relocation of port facilities to Wirral. As responses were required by 5th December 2008, he recommended that Cabinet endorse the comments set out in Section 3 of the report which form the basis of the representations made by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services. In particular, Wirral Council supported the principle of regeneration of Ellesmere Port waterfront. However, this should not harm the priorities in RSS policies LCR1 and LCR2, nor be achieved at the expense of the environmental conditions experienced by Wirral residents, or through any relocated port facilities having an adverse impact on internationally important habitats.

Resolved - That the comments set out in Section 3 of this report which have formed the basis of the representations made by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services, be endorsed. In particular, Wirral Council supports the principle of regeneration of Ellesmere Port waterfront. However, this should not harm the priorities in RSS policies LCR1 and LCR2, nor be achieved at the expense of the environmental conditions experienced by Wirral residents, or through any relocated port facilities having an adverse impact on internationally important habitats.

307 REFERRALS FROM CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Cabinet received two scrutiny reviews that had been undertaken by the Children's Services and Lifelong Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny of the outcomes for Children in Foster Care and the Youth Outreach Scrutiny Review.

It was noted that many of the recommendations from the Foster Care review had been implemented and this had contributed to an improved Ofsted inspection judgement.

Work had also commenced on the implementation of the recommendations of the Youth Outreach Scrutiny Review.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the scrutiny reviews and praised the work that had been undertaken by the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning also welcomed the reviews. Councillor Phil Davies moved a motion, duly seconded, and it was

Resolved - That

(1) Cabinet welcomes the reports of the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcomes for Children in Foster Care and Youth Outreach;

(2) the Committee is thanked for these thorough, balanced and informative reviews;

(3) Cabinet notes that excellent work has been done by staff in the Children and Young People's Department in respect of the Fostering report, resulting in a much improved Ofsted assessment, and it therefore wishes to thank and commend the fostering team for this work;

(4) Cabinet looks forward to the next annual report on fostering being presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee showing that all recommendations have been implemented;

(5) Cabinet notes that progress has been made in implementing the Youth Outreach report recommendations in aligning Youth Outreach to Area Forum areas and Districts – Cabinet asks the Director to present a report in Spring 2009 showing how structural changes can be made to implement other recommendations; and

(6) Cabinet also asks the Director of Children's Services to submit a further report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2009 showing how all the recommendations in the Youth Outreach report have been carried forward.

308 **SCHEME AND ESTIMATE REPORT - ELLERAY PARK SPECIAL SCHOOL - CLASSROOM EXTENSION AND INTERNAL ALTERATIONS**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report proposing a scheme and estimate for alterations and an extension at Elleray Park Special School, Wallasey, including improved teaching and resource facilities, improved reception and security measures, and improved staff accommodation to meet current requirements. It was recommended that the scheme and estimate be approved and that officers be instructed to proceed to tender.

Resolved – That

(1) the Scheme and Estimate as presented be accepted;

(2) approval be given for Director of Technical Services to obtain tenders for the scheme and the Director of Children's Services use his delegated powers, if appropriate, to accept the lowest bona fide tender and report back to Cabinet; and

(3) the Director of Technical Services be authorised to obtain all necessary statutory approvals for the scheme.

309 **ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2010-2011**

The Director of Children's Services invited the Cabinet to initiate consultation on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and the co-ordinated scheme for admissions to all primary schools in 2010-2011.

Resolved - That consultation on admission arrangements to primary schools takes place in the spring term 2009.

310 **ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2010-2011**

The Director of Children's Services invited the Cabinet to initiate consultation on the arrangements for admission to secondary schools in 2010 – 2011.

Resolved - That the consultation on admissions to secondary schools takes place in the spring term 2009.

311 **INITIAL UPDATE ON ACTIONS TAKEN FOLLOWING THE CASE OF BABY P IN HARINGEY**

The Leader of the Council indicated that he had agreed to consideration of this matter as an item of urgent business.

The Director of Children's Services provided the Cabinet with an outline of the initial steps that had been taken on behalf of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Council in response to Ofsted and the Secretary of State's request that action be taken by all Councils to audit and improve the safeguarding arrangements already provided through the Children Act's.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning noted that it was important that all agencies worked together on this matter and it was hoped that the work would be shared amongst agencies. He referred to an increase in the number of children in local authority care and referred to the need to support staff at this worrying time.

The Deputy Leader of the Council referred to the caseloads in place and the plans to assist with this matter and the Charing of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Resolved: That the progress made be noted and further reports be submitted to the Cabinet as appropriate.

312 **BUDGETARY ISSUES - 2008-2009**

Members were informed of the action taken to address shortfalls in the Technical Services budget, first identified in 2007-2008, and advised of further variations which had arisen in 2008-2009, exacerbated by the current economic climate. The Director of Technical Services put forward proposals to deal with those variations, together with a strategy to address issues raised in the 2007-2008 Audit Commission Annual Governance Report relating to the capitalisation of highways maintenance and the recording of expenditure on infrastructure assets.

Resolved - That

- (1) the Council be recommended that the current re-engineered 2008-2009 budget detailed in Appendix 1 be agreed, which reflects the virements contained within paragraph 2.2;
- (2) the revised charges detailed in paragraph 5.8 which should generate an additional £50,000 per annum;
- (3) the actions being taken in respect of infrastructure assets be noted and the proposal to capitalise an additional £500,000 of highways maintenance expenditure be agreed as detailed in paragraph 7 and used to address the shortfalls identified in paragraph.8.1; and
- (4) the proposal contained in paragraph 8.1 be noted and the Director of Technical Services explore ways of containing the 2008-2009 deficit within existing resources and report further on the position for 2009-2010 early in the new financial year.

ADJOURNMENT

The Cabinet adjourned at 8.05pm and reconvened at 8.35pm.

313 PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES - EARLY VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT AND VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE UPDATE

This matter was withdrawn.

314 MERSEYSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY SERVICE - CONTRACT RENEWAL

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services advised members that the Council jointly funded the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service, which provided specialist advice on the Local Development Framework and planning applications. Technical expertise and funding was shared between the five Merseyside District Councils and Halton Borough Council, thus providing economies of scale and specialist services that could not be effectively provided at District level.

Members' agreement was sought to a renewal of the contract for provision of that important advisory service for the period to 31st March 2009 in accordance with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Funding was to be shared between the Corporate Services and Technical Services Departments and could be accommodated within existing budgets.

Resolved – That, In accordance with paragraph 5.1.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet agrees to extend the MEAS contract on the terms described above until 31st March 2009, at a cost of £31,673 for 2008/09.

315 **SPEED LIMIT AND TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER REVIEW**

The Director of Technical Services identified key elements of necessary review work on speed limits and Traffic Regulation Orders to be undertaken in the next two years for the Council, as local Highway Authority, to comply with statutory requirements.

His report sought Cabinet's approval to engage consultants via the existing Consultancy Framework in order to complete the review within the set timescale and the cost of this work would be met from Local Transport Plan 2008-2011 capital allocations.

This was a key decision included within the Forward Plan.

Resolved - That

(1) the statutory requirement to review speed limits on all A and B classified roads by 2011 be noted;

(2) the Director of Technical Services be authorised to engage consultants from the Consultancy Framework to undertake a review of all speed limits and Traffic Regulation Orders on all A, B and C class roads as suggested in this report;

(3) funding from the LTP Capital Programme 2008-2011 be endorsed as follows:

£225,000 in 2009/10

£155,000 in 2010/11

(4) the Director of Technical Services to provide further reports as necessary to update Cabinet on the progress of this Review.

316 **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.

317 **COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS**

The Director of Finance presented a report reviewing Council Tax charges for second homes, long-term empty homes and the annual option for the Council to set locally defined discount schemes. He requested Members to decide if any amendments to current discounts should be brought into operation for 2009/10.

Resolved - That

- (1) with regard to Second Homes no amendment be made to the current discount levels of 25% for 2009-10;**
- 2) with regard to Long Term Empty Properties no amendment be made to current discount level of 50% for 2009/10; and**
- (3) with regard to Local Discounts the discounts of 50% for the refuge and 75% for both flats continue to be awarded to Wirral Women and Children's Aid for 2009-10.**

318 BUSINESS TRAVEL CONTRACT

The Director of Finance advised that Council did not currently have a formal Contract in place for Business Travel, Rail Travel, Hotel Accommodation, Conferences and Air Travel.

The current method of procuring business travel had not been subject to a formal corporate tendering procedure, and was undertaken by individual departments.

His report outlined the work undertaken by the Procurement Team, in collaboration with the Merseyside Procurement Group (MPG) and, recommended the award of a contract to Redfern Travel to provide a corporate travel service for Council use for three years commencing on 1 January 2009.

Resolved - That

- (1) the financial and efficiency savings identified in the report be noted and changes to the way the Council currently procures Business Travel be supported;**
- (2) the award of the contract for Business Travel to Redfern Travel be approved; and**
- (3) the contract implementation plan be approved.**

319 SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF PHOTOCOPIERS AND MULTI-FUNCTIONAL DEVICES

The Director of Finance informed Members of a tender for the supply, installation and maintenance of photocopiers and multi-functional devices. Approval was sought from Cabinet to award to the most economically advantageous tenderer.

The Director of Finance reported that further information had come to light on an alternative system since the publication of this report. It was therefore agreed that further discussions were to take place on this matter. Following those discussions the Director of Finance would be given delegated authority to accept the tender set

out in the recommendation of the report, or alternatively, would bring a further report to the Cabinet.

Resolved - That the Director of Finance be given delegated authority to accept the tender set out in the report recommendation, subject to further discussions taking place regarding an alternative system and a further report to Cabinet if required.

320 **WIRRAL DOCKS BRIDGES - FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE STRATEGY**

The Director of Technical Services described the current position with regard to the condition of and management arrangements for the major highway bridges within the Wirral Docks area. His report contained proposals for a medium-term maintenance strategy. Cabinet was requested to approve the strategy and the Director of Technical Services' proposal to re-negotiate the terms of the Council's current Operating Agreement with Peel Ports (Mersey Docks and Harbour Company) and to introduce improved liaison procedures relating to the management of the bridges. Cabinet was also requested to endorse the view that the long-term future of the key bridges be reviewed as part of Peel Holdings' traffic and transportation studies in connection with the Wirral Waters development proposals.

This was a key decision included within the Forward Plan.

Resolved - That:

- (1) the medium-term maintenance strategy outlined in paragraph 4.1 and Appendix A and the proposed way forward outlined in paragraph 5.1 be endorsed;**
- (2) the Director of Technical Services and the Director of Law, HR & Asset Management be authorised to re-negotiate the terms of the bridge Operating Agreement executed in December 1987 with Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and to agree improved inter-organisational working arrangements and procedures for the effective maintenance management of the opening bridges; and**
- (3) the Director of Technical Services be authorised to request that Peel Holdings consider the content of the Faber Maunsell report when devising their traffic and transportation strategy for the Wirral Waters development proposals and consider the potential replacement of the bridges where appropriate.**

321 **NEPTUNE DEVELOPMENTS, NEW BRIGHTON**

The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management provided an update to Cabinet on the progress of the New Brighton development and sought approval to vary the terms of the legal agreements in place to reflect proposed changes to the programme of development.

Resolved –That

- (1) the variations to the Supplemental Development Agreements as set out in points (1), (2), (3) and (4) of paragraph 17.1 of the report be agreed;**
- (2) the additional expenditure referred to in paragraph 3.9 of the report be endorsed; and**
- (30) the Director of Law HR and Asset Management be authorised to complete any necessary documentation.**

322 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no further items of business.