



Cabinet

Date:	Thursday, 23 April 2009
Time:	6.15 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Mark Delap
Tel: 0151 691 8500
e-mail: markdelap@wirral.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting have been printed and published. Any matters called in will be reported at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CORPORATE RESOURCES

3. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/2008 (Pages 1 - 28)

4. CORPORATE PLAN 2009/12 DELIVERY PLAN

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services to be circulated separately.

5. DELIVERING IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN - REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES CHILD CARE TEAM (Pages 29 - 34)

6. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES (Pages 35 - 42)

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Report of the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to be circulated separately.

8. CHANGE PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT (Pages 43 - 48)

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

9. ALLOCATION OF EARLY YEARS QUALITY AND ACCESS CAPITAL GRANT TO PROVIDERS (Pages 49 - 56)

10. COMMISSIONING CRITERIA FOR UNIVERSAL, OPEN ACCESS YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES (Pages 57 - 70)

11. IMPROVING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (Pages 71 - 90)

12. PROPOSED CENTRE FOR WALLASEY YOUTH PROJECT AT THE FIRE STATION, MILL LANE, WALLASEY (Pages 91 - 102)

13. PLAYBUILDER PROGRAMME (Pages 103 - 138)

REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY

14. A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL - FINAL DRAFT (Pages 139 - 210)

15. WORKING WIRRAL - ALLOCATION OF THE REMAINING UNALLOCATED WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND (Pages 211 - 216)

16. SUMMARY AND RESPONSE TO THE RS2010 REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND'S NORTH WEST: PRINCIPLES AND ISSUES PAPER (Pages 217 - 232)

17. WIRRAL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME (Pages 233 - 240)

18. BUSINESS START UP PANEL: INDEMNITY AGREEMENT WITH NORTH WEST DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (Pages 241 - 244)

FINANCE AND BEST VALUE

19. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Pages 245 - 260)

20. RISK AND RETURN ENGLISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE ICELANDIC BANKS (Pages 261 - 268)

21. ECONOMIC UPDATE (Pages 269 - 274)

STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

- 22. PROPOSALS FOR THE REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY (Pages 275 - 290)**

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 23. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING AND REGENERATION ASSISTANCE POLICY (Pages 291 - 296)**
- 24. THE FUTURE OF TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN WIRRAL (Pages 297 - 304)**
- 25. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

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

REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY

- 26. THE SAIL, WEST KIRBY - FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services to be circulated separately.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

- 27. EXTENSION OF SPECIAL NEEDS HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT CONTRACTS (Pages 305 - 306)**

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 28. HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL INITIATIVE - BRAY AND BRASSEY STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD OPTION APPRAISAL (Pages 307 - 318)**
- 29. CRAVEN STREET/PATERSON STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD FACELIFT SCHEME, BIRKENHEAD (Pages 319 - 328)**

CULTURE, TOURISM AND LEISURE

- 30. RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVE SERVICES (Pages 329 - 338)**

31. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To consider any other business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Wirral MBC

Audit 2007/08

March 2009



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Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/ members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
- any third party.

Key messages

- 1 Wirral Council has improved its final assessment under CPA and is assessed as three star and improving well. Good overall progress is being made against local priorities. The Council has significantly improved levels of recycling and cleanliness. Good progress is also being made to regenerate the area and the Council has been successful in attracting and supporting new business in the borough.
- 2 Educational attainment continues to improve and youth sport and leisure activities are contributing to reduced levels of anti-social behaviour. Crime is reducing in most areas. The Council has a good understanding of the different needs of its communities, and is effectively managing and improving access to its services. Areas for improvement include getting young people into education, employment or training and homelessness prevention.
- 3 Challenges remain around the number of older people who are supported to live at home and although action has been taken to reduce teenage conceptions, current rates are still significantly above local targets.
- 4 The Council continues to develop its capacity for future delivery and has improved its arrangements for managing its resources. Ambitions and priorities for the area have been clarified and performance management arrangements are being strengthened. The Council has improved the way in which it manages its financial resources and is making good progress in delivering overall cost efficiencies.
- 5 Our work on Use of Resources concluded that the Council had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2008 but further improvements could be made. Improvement areas identified as weaknesses in last years audit letter have progressed including financial management, financial standing, strategic workforce development and asset management. Challenges remain to improve the understanding of cost data and its use in challenging comparative performance on value for money; sickness absence, and, the use of information technology in driving the efficiency agenda.
- 6 Unqualified audit opinions were issued on both the Council's and the Merseyside Pension Fund financial statements in September 2008. The accounts were subject to some amendments but where on the whole well prepared and supported by good working papers.
- 7 During 2007/08 we carried out a number of risk based reviews across the Merseyside area including democratic arrangements, data quality, health inequalities, community cohesion, and waste management. Whilst the Council generally performs well there are a number of strategic challenges that remain for both the Council and its partners.
- 8 The public service inspectorates are currently developing a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). During 2009 CAA will provide the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there.

Action needed by the Council

- 9 The Council and its partners need to continue to strengthen and review the delivery capacity and performance management arrangements of the local strategic partnership in order to meet the outcomes identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and to respond to the recommendations identified in our reviews of health inequalities, community cohesion, and waste management.
- 10 Reporting of performance at both the LSP and within the Council needs further improvement in terms of clearer focus on key issues, performance against target and the action that is specifically being taken to address areas of underperformance.
- 11 The Council and its partners need to accelerate proposals to develop services around alcohol harm as the rate of hospital stays related to alcohol in Wirral is now the second worst in the country.
- 12 The Council needs to further strengthen arrangements for safeguarding children and young people. Work is on-going but has not yet had an impact. Ofsted have judged current arrangements as 'adequate'.
- 13 Ensure that the Council strengthens its arrangements for improving value for money by:
 - developing clear information on costs;
 - ensuring that members and managers use cost and performance information in a consistent way to challenge and monitor VFM; and
 - ensuring that the Council has sufficient capacity to effectively deliver the programme of corporate and service reviews for 2009 and beyond.

Purpose, responsibilities and scope

- 14** This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2007/08 and from any inspections undertaken since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.
- 15** We have addressed this letter to members as it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that it safeguards and properly accounts for public money. We have made recommendations to assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities.
- 16** This letter also communicates the significant issues to key external stakeholders, including members of the public. We will publish this letter on the Audit Commission website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk. (In addition, the Council is planning to publish it on its website.)
- 17** As your appointed auditor I am responsible for planning and carrying out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, I review and report on:
- the Council's accounts;
 - whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money conclusion); and
 - whether the Council's best value performance plan has been prepared and published in line with legislation and statutory guidance.
- 18** This letter includes the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the CPA framework, including our Direction of Travel report and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. It summarises the key issues arising from the CPA and any such inspections. Inspection reports are issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.
- 19** We have listed the reports issued to the Council relating to 2007/08 audit and inspection work at the end of this letter.

How is Wirral Council performing?

20 The Audit Commission’s overall judgement is that Wirral Borough Council is improving well and we have classified the Council as three star in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These assessments have been completed in all single tier and county councils with the following results.

Figure 1 Overall performance of councils in CPA



Percentage figures may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding

Source: Audit Commission

How is Wirral Council performing?

Our overall assessment - the CPA scorecard

Table 1 CPA scorecard

Element	Assessment
Direction of Travel judgement	Improving well
Overall	3 star
Corporate assessment/capacity to improve	2 out of 4
Current performance	
Children and young people*	3 out of 4
Social care (adults)*	3 out of 4
Use of resources*	3 out of 4
Housing	3 out of 4
Environment	3 out of 4
Culture	2 out of 4
Benefits	4 out of 4

(Note: * these aspects have a greater influence on the overall CPA score)
(1 = lowest, 4 = highest)

The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

- 21** In this section we comment on the Council's overall direction of travel, and the progress it is making against its overall priorities. Our overall conclusion is that the Council is improving well.
- 22** Good overall progress is being made against local priorities. The Council has significantly improved levels of recycling and cleanliness. Good progress is also being made to regenerate the area and the Council has been successful in attracting and supporting new business in the borough. Educational attainment continues to improve and youth sport and leisure activities are contributing to reduced levels of anti-social behaviour. Crime is reducing in most areas. The Council has a good understanding of the different needs of its communities, and is effectively managing and improving access to its services. Areas for improvement include getting young people into education, employment or training and homelessness prevention.
- 23** The Council continues to develop its capacity for future delivery and has improved its arrangements for managing its resources. Ambitions and priorities for the area have been clarified and performance management arrangements are being strengthened. The Council has improved the way in which it manages its financial resources and is making good progress in delivering overall cost efficiencies.

What evidence is there of the Council improving outcomes?

To raise the aspirations of young people

- 24** Improvement against this priority area is particularly strong. Levels of educational attainment in the borough are good and improving, and some excellent work is being done by the Council and its partners around youth sport and leisure to promote positive attitudes and behaviour. The Council's services for children and young people have retained their overall rating of 'good', but action to further strengthen arrangements for safeguarding children and young people has not yet had an impact and arrangements remain assessed as 'adequate'.

To create more jobs, achieve a prosperous economy and regenerate Wirral

- 25** Improvement against this priority area is good. The Council and its partners have been successful in attracting and supporting new business in the borough, and strategic frameworks for driving economic regeneration and tackling worklessness are now in place. However, whilst action to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is having some impact, performance in this area is currently below local targets.

To create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment

- 26** Improvement against this priority area is good. The Council is demonstrating considerable community leadership in championing environmental sustainability, and is continuing to invest to ensure it maintains a high profile. Improvements in recycling rates and standards of cleanliness within the borough are also being maintained. Good progress has generally been made in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, but the Council and its partners are not yet achieving their targets relating to the incidence of serious violent crime and road safety remains an area of concern. The Council and its partners are effective in balancing the borough's housing market and responding to the needs of homeless people. However, work to prevent homelessness has not yet delivered improvements.

To improve health and well being for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society

- 27** Improvement against this priority area is mixed. The Council's adult and social care services have retained their overall rating of 'good' from the Commission for Social Care Inspection, and work is underway to deliver improvements. This has started to have a positive impact, for example in terms of the delivery of community equipment and the number of adults with mental health problems who are helped to live at home. However, challenges remain around the number of older people who are supported to live at home.
- 28** Although action has been taken to reduce teenage conceptions, current rates are still significantly above local targets. The Council and its partners also need to accelerate proposals to develop services around alcohol harm as the rate of hospital stays related to alcohol in Wirral is now the second worst in the country.

How is Wirral Council performing?

Community Engagement

- 29** The Council has a good understanding of the different needs of its communities, and is effectively managing and improving access to its services. Access to Services is good and diversity and equality issues in both the provision of services and employment practice are continuing to be addressed proactively. Building on its good track record of engaging local people in decision-making processes, the Council has taken steps this year to empower the community through a pilot of participatory budgeting in two of its area forums and the introduction of the 'You Decide' initiative.

Value for Money

- 30** The Council has improved the way in which it manages its financial resources and is making good progress in delivering overall cost efficiencies. Value for money is generally being achieved in that costs are broadly commensurate with the range, level and quality of services being provided. Work is on-going to ensure a robust value for money culture is established in all service areas.

How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain further improvement?

- 31** In overall terms, the capacity of the Council for sustaining improvements is developing well. A coherent planning framework is being put in place, and work is underway to develop capacity both within the local partnership and the Council. Arrangements for performance management, sickness absence and ensuring the benefits of ICT investment are being strengthened.
- 32** A coherent framework for planning and delivering local improvements is being put in place. Over the past year, the Council and its partners have made good use of intelligence and adopted a robust and systematic approach to identify local priorities. These are embedded in the sustainable community strategy which is to be formally adopted in March 2009. Fully aligned to the sustainable community strategy, the Council's corporate plan for 2008/13 provides a clear and concise statement of its medium term vision and priorities. Action is continuing to be taken to ensure that these are consistently reflected and supported by business plans at service level. Measurable targets still need to be defined for all performance indicators to enable fully effective performance management.
- 33** Action is being taken to further strengthen the capacity of the local partnership for delivery. The overall structure of the partnership, together with governance arrangements and accountabilities, are being reviewed and revised to ensure that the Council and its partners remain focused on local priorities. There are areas to develop such as arrangements to ensure the quality and availability of shared data for ongoing performance management.

- 34** The Council is making progress in strengthening its own performance management arrangements. The corporate improvement and performance management groups are helping to co-ordinate the Council's business and arrangements for reporting to Members is to be improved. Reports have been revised to cover both finance and all aspects of performance but there are areas for improvement in terms of clearer focus on key issues, performance against target and the action that is specifically being taken to address areas of underperformance.
- 35** The Council is strengthening its strategic arrangements for developing its workforce in line with current and future business needs. A corporate leadership programme is underway, and work is being undertaken to ensure workforce planning is more closely aligned to the business planning process for 2009/10. As part of this, an on-line tool is being introduced to help identify skills gaps and a new People Strategy is being developed for 2009. However, the Council is already making good progress in strengthening its capacity in priority areas such as asset management.
- 36** More work needs to be done to ensure optimal use is made of staff. For example, the Council did not meet its target for reducing sickness absence in 2007/08 and rates remain higher than other authorities. The Council has investigated the reasons for this and is now considering measures to ensure that policies and procedures are more consistently implemented. Additionally, whilst some important developments are taking place around information technology (IT) at the Council, this is not yet driving efficiency in all service areas.

Service inspections and assessments

- 37** The CPA score is made up of a number of service assessments made by the Audit Commission and other inspectorates. We also carried out an inspection of Access to Services in the year.

Assessments from the Audit Commission

- 38** The housing, environment, culture and use of resources scores are assessed by the Audit Commission.

Table 2 Assessments from the Audit Commission

Wirral Borough Council receives a number of assessments from the Audit Commission that contribute to the CPA score for 2008

<p>Housing - The Council's performance in 'community housing' and, where applicable, 'housing management' services, are assessed by the Audit Commission.</p> <p>The score is based on two sets of indicators 'housing the community' and 'managing housing' performance indicators, such as time in temporary accommodation and homelessness, and the 2007 inspection report 'Strategic approach to housing'.</p>	<p>Wirral Borough Council scored 3 (out of 4) in the performance information element in the 2008 'housing the community' assessment. This is the same as last year.</p> <p>As the Council is no longer a landlord it has not been assessed for 'managing housing'.</p>
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How is Wirral Council performing?

<p>Environment - The Council's performance in services, such as transport, planning and waste, as assessed by the Audit Commission.</p> <p>The assessment is based on environmental performance indicators.</p>	<p>Wirral Borough Council scored 3 (out of 4) in the performance element in the 2008 service assessment. This represents an increase from the score of 2 last year.</p>
<p>Culture - The Council's performance in services, such as libraries and leisure, are assessed by the Audit Commission.</p> <p>The assessment is based on a small number of cultural services performance indicators.</p>	<p>Wirral Borough Council scored 2 (out of 4) in the performance information element in the 2008 culture service assessment. This represents a reduction from the score of 3 last year.</p>
<p>Benefits - The Council's performance in providing housing and council tax benefit services as assessed by the Audit Commission and is based primarily on achievement against housing benefits/council tax benefits performance standards.</p>	<p>Wirral Council scored 3.79 (rounded to 4) out of 4 in the performance information element in the 2008 benefits service assessment. This is the same as last year.</p>
<p>Use of resources - The Audit Commission review the Council's performance in financial reporting, financial management, financial standing, internal control and value for money.</p>	<p>Wirral Borough Council scored 3 (out of 4) in the 2008 use of resources assessment. This represents an increase from the score of 2 last year. More detail is provided later in this letter.</p>

Access to services inspection

- 39 During the year we carried out an inspection of access to services. We assessed Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council as providing good, two-star access to services that has promising prospects for improvement.
- 40 The Council provides good access to services because it has a number of strengths including:
- a planned and strategic approach to designing and providing access to services that are considered in service planning;
 - a good understanding of the diverse needs of users;
 - accessible and responsive services that address specific community needs;
 - a wide range of methods to engage with local people and other stakeholders;
 - a proactive focus on diversity and equalities in service delivery; and
 - good use of partnerships to provide access to seamless services that are helping to improve the quality of life for local people.

41 Areas for further development include:

- telephone contact with the Council is generally limited to office hours with no evening or weekend service except for emergencies;
- the number of abandoned enquiries to the call centre is high;
- not all public buildings are accessible to, and suitable for, people with a disability;
- inconsistencies in service standards and the extent to which users are involved in defining them; and
- sharing of information is not systematic across all council services to provide comprehensive profiles about users and non-users.

42 Access to services has promising prospects for improvement because:

- the Council has improved access to a range of services for users to meet their diverse needs;
- progress on implementing diversity and equalities policies is positive;
- value for money has improved in terms of accessing a range of services;
- plans are in place and resourced to further improve access to services for users in accordance with their needs and preferences;
- effective arrangements and an appropriate culture are in place to support continuous improvement in accessing services;
- the Council learns from its own experiences and users' feedback; and
- overall the Council has the capacity to deliver service improvements, including working with community, private and voluntary sector partners.

43 Areas for further development include:

- integrating and consolidating action plans and other strategies to further improve access to services within the Customer Access Strategy;
- obtaining feedback from non-users and assessing satisfaction levels across communities to further inform service delivery;
- wider application of a customer relationship management system to support frontline services;
- monitoring and reporting performance against individual service standards; and
- evaluating the costs and benefits of each of the Council's own access channels.

Assessments from other inspectorates

44 An important aspect of the role of the Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead (CAAL) is to work with other inspectorates and regulators who also review and report on the Council's performance. CAALs share information and seek to provide 'joined up' regulation to the Council. During the last year, the Council has received the following assessments from other inspectorates.

Table 3 Assessments from other inspectorates

Wirral Borough Council receives a number of assessments from other inspectorates that contribute to the CPA score for 2008

<p>Children and young people - The Council's performance in providing children's services, such as children's education and social care. The joint assessment is made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and Ofsted following a review of the Council's overall performance and key indicators.</p>	<p>Wirral Council scored 3 (out of 4) in the 2008 children and young people's assessment which is the same as last year.</p> <p>The joint assessment concluded that the Council delivers services for children and young people that are above minimum requirements overall. The Council's capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. Overall, the Council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in 2007.</p>
<p>Social care (adults) - The Council's performance in adult social care services. The assessment is made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection following a review of the Council's overall performance and key indicators.</p>	<p>Wirral Council scored 3 (out of 4) in the 2008 adult social care assessment which is the same as last year. The performance judgements for Wirral were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivering outcomes: Good ● Capacity for improvement: Promising <p>The adult social care services performance rating by CSCI was 2 stars.</p>

The audit of the accounts and value for money

Audit of the accounts

- 45** As your appointed auditor I have reported separately to the Audit and Risk Management Committee in the Annual Governance Report (AGR) on the issues arising from our 2007/08 audit and have issued:
- my audit report, providing an unqualified opinion on your accounts and a conclusion on your vfm arrangements to say that these arrangements are adequate. This was issued on 30 September 2008 and
 - my report on the Best Value Performance Plan confirming that the Plan has been audited was issued in December 2007.
 - I also issued my report on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts on 20 November 2008
- 46** The financial statements submitted for audit were complete although they contained some errors. During the audit, management agreed to 5 adjustments to the figures in the accounts that we recommended and also made amendments to some notes to the accounts. The more significant issues included a material adjustment of £9.465m to the prior year figure for tangible fixed assets and a note to explain the treatment of an increase of £9m in the estimate of pension fund assets that we agreed should not be amended. In total the adjustments had no overall impact on revenue resources.
- 47** The arrangements for production of your financial statements are satisfactory. The draft financial statements were produced by the target date and the working papers to support the financial statements were good. This has also been a year when new and more complex accounting and reporting arrangements have been introduced, for example, the introduction of the new revaluation reserve, accounting for financial instruments and the new Annual Governance Statement. The Council has introduced these new requirements successfully whilst also improving on issues raised last year.
- 48** We made recommendations for some further improvement in the accuracy of the statements, quality assurance processes and internal control across the Council. The agreed action plan from the 2007/08 AGR is being monitored by the Audit and Risk Management Committee and we are monitoring the progress of closedown plans for the 2008/09 statements. .

The audit of the accounts and value for money

Use of Resources

49 The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas.

- Financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
- Financial management (including how financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
- Financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).
- Internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
- Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).

50 For the purposes of the CPA we have assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as follows.

Table 4

Element	Assessment
Financial reporting	2 out of 4
Financial management	3 out of 4
Financial standing	3 out of 4
Internal control	3 out of 4
Value for money	2 out of 4
Overall assessment of the Audit Commission	3 out of 4

Note: 1 – lowest, 4 = highest

51 The Council's performance demonstrates significant improvement in the use of resources during the period of assessment from April 2007 to March 2008. The overall assessment has improved in two out of the five themes - financial management and financial standing moved from scores of 2 to level 3. Financial reporting and value for money remained at level 2, although there were notable improvements in arrangements in both areas. The overall assessment has increased from 2 out of 4 to 3 out of 4 representing an assessment of 'performing well'.

Financial reporting (2 out of 4)

- 52** The Council produces annual accounts generally in accordance with relevant standards and scored 2 for this element of financial reporting. The financial statements submitted for audit contained some errors. However, the adjustments had no overall impact on revenue resources and we issued an unqualified opinion. The arrangements for production of the financial statements were good. We made recommendations for some further improvement in quality assurance processes and internal control across the Council. There is also scope for further training for members and more prompt reporting to ensure that the statements are subject to robust scrutiny prior to approval.
- 53** The Council promotes external accountability well and scored 3 for this element of financial reporting. The accounts and local electors' rights to view them and contact the external auditor were published in line with requirements. Key external reports as well as the Council's own reports, minutes and agenda are available to the public. A leaflet summarising the accounts has been produced and distributed and an Annual Report was published in November 2008.

Financial management (3 out of 4)

- 54** The Council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS), budgets and capital programme are soundly based and designed to deliver its strategic priorities and scored 3 for this element of financial management.
- 55** The Council manages performance against budgets and scored 3 for this element of financial management. Sound arrangements are in place for monitoring and reporting performance against budgets. There were no material overspends in 2007/08 and those that did occur were expected and managed within the Council's overall resources. Financial information systems are appropriate for managing performance against budgets.
- 56** The Council manages its asset base adequately and scored 2 for this element of financial management. The Capital Strategy and guidance were kept up to date and approved by Cabinet during the year and again in July 2008 when they were updated in line with the new corporate priorities. The Capital Strategy is also better linked to the updated MTFP and Asset Management Plan (AMP) and is based on an up to date asset register as well as taking into account planned maintenance. The Council has a designated property function and is strengthening capacity with the reorganisation of asset management under a new director and head of assets. The strategic asset review is now largely complete, members have confirmed their decisions and implementation will take place over the next few years.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

Financial standing (3 out of 4)

- 57** Current spending plans match available resources, although like other councils, Wirral continually faces significant challenges to close the budget gap and meet efficiency plans. The Council has a track record of setting a balanced budget and maintaining spending within the budget without significant unexpected overspends or underspends. Income collection is monitored throughout the year to achieve targets and debt recovery is effective. Wirral has invested £2m with an Icelandic bank but as the exposure is low and reserves and balances are prudent it does not indicate poor financial standing or financial management.
- 58** The Council has recently agreed a net revenue budget of £311m and capital programme of £80m for 2009/10. It is expected that balances will be maintained at a minimum of £6m. The latest projections for the 2008/09 financial year continue to highlight the anticipated overspending in adult social services and indicate that overall the general fund balance would be around £6m.

Internal control (3 out of 4)

- 59** The Council manages its significant business risks well and scored 3 for this element of internal control. During the year it has strengthened risk management and built on sound arrangements to improve reporting to members both at portfolio and at corporate level.
- 60** The Council has good arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control and scored 3 for this element. It has recognised the importance of the new Annual Governance Statement and taken corporate responsibility in its development and approval. The operation of the Audit Committee is improving, Internal Audit meets the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) standards and scrutiny is effective.
- 61** The Council has adequate arrangements in place to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business and scored 2 for this element of internal control. However, during the year the Audit Commission received a Public Interest Disclosure Act referral in respect of an individual's concerns about contracts and charging in adult social services. Our review found the individual's concerns may be largely justified and we have therefore raised concerns about the failure of the Council's own systems for dealing with complaints and concerns, including the whistleblowing procedure. The Council is currently following up our report and we will report the outcome separately.

Value for money (2 out of 4)

- 62** Compared with nearest neighbour councils particularly, the cost in Wirral of education, adult social care, housing and benefits are top quartile, performance in services is generally average with some areas of good performance and satisfaction levels are average in most areas. Spending is generally in line with priorities with one significant area of unintended high spending in adult social care. The capital programme is well managed but there are some areas for improvement. There have been some positive improvements to processes aimed at delivering VFM but actions such as the review of VFM profiles are still ongoing into 2008/09 and have not yet delivered improvements in VFM. The VFM review has subsequently been reported to Cabinet in September 2008.

63 Understanding of costs continues to improve but unit costs are under developed and best practice approaches are not consistently extended across the Council. Wirral compares its costs with other councils using the high level VFM profile data but understanding of detailed costs is less well developed and the challenge on costs needs to be extended to other services.

Democratic arrangements

64 During the year we reported on our review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's current democratic arrangements.

65 The Council has put in place a number of arrangements that have improved the effectiveness and efficiency of its democratic arrangements over the past 18 months. The Council has made steady progress and has addressed many of the issues raised by the corporate assessment in 2005.

- Roles and responsibilities of both the executive and scrutiny functions of the Council are clearer and a structured member development programme to support members in their scrutiny role has been put in place.
- The Council has taken steps to reduce the number of reports submitted to cabinet by establishing a virtual committee. It has also introduced a limited scheme of delegation to executive members to improve the effectiveness of the cabinet.
- Decision-making at cabinet is more transparent and members can access information easily.
- Scrutiny committees have introduced a formal cycle of financial and performance reporting. This has made it easier for members to review the Council's performance.
- Scrutiny committees have developed clearer work programmes and are becoming more focused.

66 However, there are a number of areas for the Council to develop further.

- The Council's current arrangements place a significant demand on senior officer time. The number of scrutiny committees and executive portfolios that senior officers need to service, means that they often spend a considerable amount of time in meetings or briefings.
- New members and chairs of scrutiny have not yet received training for their new roles. Members felt that they required more support in their roles, such as performance management and that training should be ongoing.
- The number of items considered by cabinet has not reduced significantly and there remains scope for further improving its efficiency and effectiveness, through increased use of the virtual committee and the expansion of the scheme of delegation to portfolio holders.
- The remit of scrutiny committees is not always clear, and there is duplication between different committees, with often several different committees reviewing the same performance information.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

67 The Audit and Risk Management Committee received an update to the action plan at the January 2009 meeting which confirmed that actions are progressing. The Cabinet meeting on 19 March 2009 resolved to support the proposal, subject to further consultation, to move to five overview and scrutiny committees, based on the Council's corporate priorities.

Community Cohesion

68 As part of the audit for 2007/08 we completed work across the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in Merseyside and Cheshire to assess the arrangements in place to address community cohesion. We evaluated how well public authorities understand the differing needs of their communities and how services are being shaped to respond to those needs.

69 The Wirral Local Strategic Partnership has a good understanding of local cohesion issues. The key cohesion issues identified by partners were:

- safer communities;
- inequalities and competition;
- isolation and participation; and
- coping with change.

70 Partners share a commitment to developing cohesive communities but there is no overarching community cohesion strategy to guide partnership work. The definition of community cohesion used by partners varies and is broadly drawn; this may mean that partners have difficulty in determining the priorities they need to address. Leadership for community cohesion is under developed at a partnership and strategic level.

71 Partner capacity to support cohesion is being developed through the Wirral Equalities Forum (WEF) and the newly merged Voluntary Community Action Wirral (VCAW). The LSP is committed to strengthening its community engagement and further explore joint community engagement activities through the development of a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy. Together, this range of activity will enable the LSP and its partners to become better engaged with under represented groups and increase partner's knowledge of the problems they encounter.

72 Partners have identified potential risks which could contribute to a lack of community cohesion but there is no evidence that the partnership manages these risks in a structured way. A number of indicators to measure cohesion are in place but these are not integrated across strategies and so do not provide a coherent framework for addressing key issues and risks.

- 73** Achievements in developing cohesive communities include good progress in engaging with specific hard to hear groups, and increasing economic activity. Challenges for the future include:
- ensuring leadership and partner commitment to developing cohesive communities is visible and sustained and that myths and rumours are challenged;
 - prioritising key issues and actions to improve community cohesion;
 - ensuring best use of partner resources; and
 - measuring success and managing risks effectively.
- 74** The Local Strategic Partnership is taking forward the action plan.

Health inequalities

- 75** As part of our 2007/08 audit, we carried out a high level review across Cheshire and Merseyside to identify the main issues facing the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in addressing health inequalities.
- 76** Wirral LSP demonstrates a number of key strengths. There are also opportunities for development which are broadly consistent with other LSPs in Cheshire and Merseyside.
- 77** There is a genuine commitment to addressing health inequalities through partnership working, and good use is being made of available data to identify priorities for action. Extending arrangements which allow partners to share local intelligence would build on this approach, helping Wirral LSP to further target its work whilst optimising its resources. This is an area where the Partnership could potentially benefit from the experiences of other LSPs, notably Halton and St Helens.
- 78** However, and in common with most other LSPs, Wirral LSP does not have a strategy specifically to reduce health inequalities. Such a strategy could provide an effective framework for
- considering and addressing the many factors which contribute to health inequalities in the Borough in a systematic and co-ordinated way; and
 - longer term financial planning, including decisions over pooling resources.
- 79** More work also needs to be done to allow the LSP to routinely evaluate the success and impact of its work.
- 80** The LSP is taking forward the action plan.

Data quality

- 81** The Council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality are adequate. Some action has been taken since last year to strengthen arrangements for data quality. Most notably, the Council has implemented a formal policy which now provides a sound foundation for promoting greater corporate ownership of data quality. Like all new policies, this now needs time to become properly established within the organisation in order for the Council to fully realise the benefits. Nevertheless, the Council could progress this by, for example, strengthening its approach to following up issues arising from internal reviews through action planning and training. Our review has also indicated that there may be scope for more effective use to be made of information technology in calculating indicators. This, in turn, may help the Council to improve the timeliness of its performance reports to Cabinet and overview and scrutiny committees. More work also needs to be done to establish data quality arrangements to support partnership working.
- 82** We carried out in-depth reviews of a number of performance indicators and concluded that with the exception of one indicator, arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice. Our review of one indicator, BVPI 8 (percentages of invoices paid on time), found that the Council had not followed the correct definition of the indicator. As a result, some data which should have been included in the calculation was not, and vice versa. We were therefore unable to certify that the PI was fairly stated. Action is being taken to rectify this situation.

Waste

- 83** The 2007/08 audit plan included an assessment of the progress made by the Merseyside Waste Partnership (Merseyside and Halton councils) to meet its obligations for the management of household and municipal waste and procure long-term treatment and disposal facilities for such waste.
- 84** The authorities are now making good progress by increasing recycling and composting of household waste. All authorities have diverted more municipal waste from landfill. They are making steady progress on the procurement of new facilities for waste handling and treatment. However, comparative performances are variable and are still worse than most other authorities - based on the latest published figures - and result in high landfill tax payments. Furthermore, disagreements over the potential location of such facilities are resulting in slower progress than planned, resulting in a significant risk of delay to the procurement process that could potentially incur additional costs of over £400 million.
- 85** The report outlines specific progress for Wirral and highlights areas for improvement.

Grant claims

- 86** The Audit Commission, under section 28 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, is required to make arrangements for certifying claims and returns in respect of grants and subsidies made or paid to the Council. The certification work is carried out by using certification Instructions (CIs) created by the Audit Commission in conjunction with the grant paying body. These CIs specify a series of tests to be carried out on each grant claim/return.
- 87** During the year we presented our report on the certification of 2006/07 grant claims to the Audit and Risk Management Committee. We certified a total of 32 claims with a total value of £178m. During the course of our certification work we amended 7 claims (22 per cent) which resulted in a net reduction of £173k in grant income. We were required to issue 8 qualification letters (25 per cent of claims) which highlighted £380k of qualified expenditure. We made recommendations to ensure eligibility of expenditure, improve quality assurance processes and working papers.
- 88** The 2007/08 grant certification programme is not yet complete. We have completed the certification for 9 claims but a number of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) claims have just been received or are expected and our work is progressing. The Audit Commission imposed an embargo on the audit certification of ERDFs from 29 November 2007 following a decision by CLG to move to a risk based approach for the requirement of independent audit certification. Following notification from CLG on which claims should be audited, the Council has been preparing the claims for submission to us.

Advice and Assistance work

Data quality workshop

- 89** Following the 2007/08 data quality audit the Council asked us to carry out a workshop to raise awareness of the importance of good data and information quality. The workshop was run on 23 February and over 40 officers attended and completed a range of case studies which required them to audit performance information and then use that information to brief chief officers and members and recommend an investment decision to Cabinet. Officers attending gained a better understanding of the impact of poor data and information in the decision making process and the importance of quality assurance processes. Policy and best value staff are now planning to roll out the workshops to others in the organisation.

Merseyside Pension Fund

- 90** Wirral Borough Council is the administering authority for the Merseyside Pension Fund. We audit the accounts of the Pension Fund and report on whether the financial statements included in the Annual Report are consistent with the statutory financial statements of Wirral Borough Council.
- 91** I issued an unqualified report, including my opinion that Merseyside Pension Fund's financial statements are consistent with the statutory financial statements of Wirral Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2008. Our Annual Governance Report was presented to the Pensions Committee on 29 September 2008.
- 92** The financial statements submitted for audit were complete but contained some errors. During the audit, management agreed to eight adjustments to the figures in the accounts and three adjustments to notes that we recommended. In total these adjustments increased the value of the fund account and the net assets statement by £1.387m.
- 93** The arrangements for production of the financial statements are satisfactory. The draft financial statements were produced by the target date and the working papers to support the financial statements were generally good.

Looking ahead

- 94** The public service inspectorates have developed a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will provide the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. It will put the experience of citizens, people who use services and local tax payers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working, the enhanced role of Sustainable Communities Strategies and Local Area Agreements and the importance of councils in leading and shaping the communities they serve.
- 95** CAA will result in reduced levels of inspection and better coordination of inspection activity. The key components of CAA will be a joint inspectorate area assessment and reporting performance on the new national indicator set, together with an organisational assessment which will combine the external auditor's assessment of value for money in the use of resources with a joint inspectorate assessment of service performance.
- 96** The first results of our work on CAA will be published in the autumn of 2009. This will include the performance data from 2008/09, the first year of the new National Indicator Set and key aspects of each area's Local Area Agreement.

Closing remarks

- 97 This letter has been discussed and agreed with the Chief Executive. A copy of the letter will be presented at the Cabinet on 23 2009. Copies need to be provided to all Council members.
- 98 Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations on the areas covered by audit and inspection work are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.

Table 5 Reports issued

Report	Date of issue
Audit and inspection plan	May 2007
Annual Governance Report - Wirral Borough Council	September 2008
Annual Governance Report - Merseyside Pension Fund	September 2008
Opinion on financial statements	September 2008
Value for money conclusion	September 2008
Opinion on Merseyside Pension Fund	September 2008
Access to services inspection	January 2009
Use of resources	January 2009
Democratic arrangements	July 2008
Community cohesion	December 2008
Health inequalities	October 2008
Data quality	January 2009
Waste	August 2008
Grant claims (2006/07)	May 2008
Comprehensive performance assessment	February 2009
Annual audit and inspection letter	March 2009

- 99 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work, and I wish to thank the Council's staff for their support and cooperation during the audit.

Availability of this letter

100 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk, and also on the Council's website.

Michael Thomas

District Auditor

Peter Forrester

CAA Lead

March 2009

The Audit Commission

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Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 0844 798 1212 Fax: 0844 798 2945 Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR and ASSET MANAGEMENT

DELIVERING IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN – REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES CHILD CARE TEAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the additional capacity required within Legal Services to deliver improved outcomes for children in need, at risk of significant harm or who have experienced significant harm. The major drivers are the findings of careful scrutiny of Legal Services following Baby P; and the Council's Corporate Plan and objectives. This report seeks Cabinet's approval to fund this additional capacity by a transfer from Children's Services and the Efficiency Investment Budget. This report has been prepared in consultation with the Director of Children's Services.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Director of Children's Services has previously reported to Cabinet the strategy in place and the additional capacity required within the Children and Young People's Directorate to deliver improved outcomes for children in need, at risk of significant harm or who have experienced significant harm. In the Director of Children's Services previous report, the need for a review of the provision of legal advice and assistance to Children's Services was recognised as an integral part of the overall strategy to protect children who have suffered or are at risk of suffering significant harm and improve outcomes for looked after children. Guidance issued by the Law Society recognises that the steps involved in the decision whether or not a child should be made the subject of care proceedings will inevitably be a complex process, requiring in-depth and regular consultation and discussion between lawyer and social worker.

2 Response to Baby P

- 2.1 The Serious Case Review Executive Summary Report prepared by Haringey Local Safeguarding Children Board into the death of Baby P makes it clear that the provision of appropriate and timely legal advice was a material issue in the case and a series of recommendations were made about the provision of legal advice including:

'All staff in Legal should be reminded of the need to comply with case management and performance standards at all times including accurate recording, filing and adherence to agreed timescales.'

'Pending a strategic review, Legal Services should ensure that sufficient numbers of lawyers with strong experience of acting for a local authority in childcare proceedings are recruited or alternative methods of service provision are explored.'

- 2.2 Clearly, proceedings to protect children have to be instigated in a timely manner and sometimes on an emergency basis. There therefore needs to be a sufficient number of lawyers within the Council's Legal Services Section with appropriate experience to give advice, draft legal documents and to attend court in order to ensure that

applications for orders to protect children are made appropriately and as expeditiously as possible. Ensuring that sufficient numbers of lawyers are available to undertake child protection work will assist the authority in managing and reducing risk to vulnerable children and young people. Beyond the paramount consideration of helping protect vulnerable children, these proposals will also help reduce the likelihood of harm to the Council's reputation and reduce the likelihood of claims against the authority.

3 Reducing the number of Looked After Children

- 3.1 One of the Council's aims underpinning its strategic objective of raising the aspirations of young people is safely to reduce the number of looked after children. Following Baby P it is likely and understandable that both individuals and agencies will become more risk averse in child care matters and this will create significant service pressures. The Director of Children's Services has already reported on proposals to manage these pressures proactively within CYPD. However, if the number of looked after children is to be safely reduced, this will require further resources in Legal Services.
- 3.2 Presently, given its very limited resources, the Child Care Team in Legal Services must give priority to cases where children are actively at risk. This means that work on discharging Care Orders (where it is safe and appropriate to do so) is not prioritised. This could lead to some children remaining in the looked after category longer than is reasonably necessary. Additional legal capacity could support CYPD in safely managing down the number of looked after children and ensure that lawyers are available sooner to attend gatekeeping meetings with social workers to review cases where discharging proceedings may be appropriate. In turn, by providing 'critical challenge' in such meetings the quality of the Council's Court applications for discharge of Care Orders will also be improved.
- 3.3 Safely reducing the number of looked after children will support the achievement of corporate objectives, including the efficient use of council resources and assist the Director of Children's Services in reducing the costs incurred by his department when children are looked after.

4. The Public Law Outline

- 4.1 In early 2006, senior members of the Judiciary undertook a review of how the then current Protocol for progressing care cases was working, and made recommendations for improving the way in which child care cases were dealt with by the courts. The Government's Review of the Child Care Proceedings System in England and Wales, published in May 2006, also recognised that there were benefits in simplifying the then current Protocol and in improving case management procedures. It was therefore agreed that a new Public Law Outline would replace the Protocol from April 2008.
- 4.2 The aim of the PLO is to streamline the Care Proceedings process, with the six stages of the Protocol reduced to four, and with enhanced case management and advocacy preparation to support this. Together with revised statutory guidance for local authorities, there is increased emphasis on preparation pre-proceedings. The front loading of proceedings has significantly increased the work that needs to be undertaken by both Children's Services and Legal Services in order to instigate proceedings for Care and Supervision Orders to protect children. Given the increase in the amount of pre-proceedings work, this has had an impact on the Child Care Solicitors' capacity in relation to issuing proceedings, which always needs to be done

in a timely manner so as not to cause delay for children who are considered to be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm. The requirement of the PLO for Advocates Meetings to take place before court hearings and for Case Management Orders to be drafted and filed in advance of hearings has also had a significant impact upon the Child Care solicitor's workload. All these factors serve to exacerbate the lack of resources for advising on safely discharging Care Orders as outlined above.

- 4.3 Another objective of the PLO is to improve the outcomes for children by reducing unnecessary delay and, to this end, to achieve the completion of all cases within an overall timetable of not more than 40 weeks. Additional legal capacity could support CYPD in reducing the overall timescale for proceedings and assist in reducing delay and helping children to achieve permanence more quickly. Delay can have a real impact on children, and section 1(2) of the Children Act 1989 specifies that delay in coming to a decision is generally to be regarded as likely to prejudice the welfare of the child. The longer it takes to resolve the question of whether or not a child should be taken into care, the longer a child has to wait for permanence in his or her life. This can mean it is more likely that children will live in a series of temporary placements until their future is decided, which may in turn impact on continuity in matters such as schooling and ultimately lead to children under achieving.
- 4.4 Reducing the length of time it takes to complete proceedings will also assist in reducing the cost of court fees and counsel's fees paid by the authority. The additional posts will reduce the need to rely on more expensive external legal advice and support and will support the Director of Children's Services in delivering an efficient and effective service.

5. Legal Services Child Care Team: Structure and Management

- 5.1 The Council's Legal Services Child Care team currently comprises three child care solicitors, managed by a Group Solicitor (who also holds responsibility for education and Adult Social Services). The requirements upon front line Child Care Solicitors have increased, and their capacity to provide good quality advice in complex situations has been starkly highlighted through the case of Baby P. In these circumstances it is vitally important that Child Care Solicitors receive good quality support and supervision. It is therefore proposed that the post of Senior Child Care Solicitor is introduced. The new post of Senior Child Care Solicitor will assist the Group Solicitor with supervision, workload management and allocation of cases across the Team and provide the capacity to drive forward improved performance and professional practice. The new post would need to have a revised job description and be submitted for grade evaluation. However, the indicative grade we would be looking for would be PO12 - 13
- 5.2 The creation of the two new legal assistant posts would also create additional capacity in the most cost effective way to alleviate pressures within the team by allowing the solicitors to concentrate on the more complex legal tasks and advocacy, whilst the legal assistants could deal with more routine legal work and attend court with Counsel. The new posts would need to be submitted for grade evaluation. However, the indicative grade we would be looking for would be Band H

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The costs of the 3 new legal posts are detailed in the table below.

Post	Grade (subject to evaluation)	FTE	Cost
Senior Solicitor	PO12 -13	1	51,007
Legal Assistant	Band H	2	71,454

6.2 The cost of the posts has been identified as £122,461. A sum of £30,000 has been identified within existing resources in Children's Services. However, a further sum of £92,461 will be required to establish the 3 posts. Because these proposals will reduce the length of time it takes to complete proceedings; assist in reducing the cost of court fees and counsel's fees; reduce the need to rely on more expensive external legal advice; and support the Director of Children's Services in delivering an efficient and effective service, it is proposed that this sum is allocated from the Council's Efficiency Investment Budget.

7. Staffing implications

7.1 The posts detailed below would be offered as permanent appointments.

Post	Grade (subject to evaluation)	FTE
Senior Solicitor	PO 12	1
Legal Assistant	Band H	2

8. Equal opportunities implications

8.1 Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken on the recruitment processes to be used and points raised within them have been addressed within the action plan.

9. Community safety implications

9.1 There are no implications under this heading.

10 Local Agenda 21 implications

10.1 The emotional and educational support put in place for children in care and care leavers in preparing young them for adulthood, which includes participating both socially and economically in society, will benefit the local community, reducing long term unemployment and the negative impact on young people's lives associated with unemployment.

11 Planning implications

11.1 There are no implications under this heading

12 Anti-poverty implications

- 12.1 The focus on improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers will enable more children and care leavers to find employment, training and education and reduce the number who are not in employment, education or training at age 19.

13 Social inclusion implications

- 13.1 The proposals outlined above support children and care leavers and promote social inclusion and community cohesion.

14 Local Member Support implications

- 14.1 The proposals put forward effect services to vulnerable children in all wards within the Borough.

15 Background papers

The Public Law Outline
Baby P Serious Case Review Executive Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the additional posts of a Senior Child Care Solicitor and two posts of Legal Assistant in Legal Services be agreed and funded from (a) a transfer from Children's Services of £30,000 and (b) £92,461 from the Efficiency Investment Budget.
- (2) That the establishment of the new posts is referred to the Employment and Appointments Committee.

Bill Norman
Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, H.R. and ASSET MANAGEMENT

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report requests the Cabinet to make recommendations to the Annual Meeting of the Council in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme. In particular it is asked to consider any up-rating of the allowances, as permitted under the scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In February 2008 the Council considered the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances in relation to the setting of a members' allowances scheme for the municipal year 2008/09. The recommendations were accepted apart from the proposed increase of £240 (2.66%). Instead the Council approved the Cabinet's recommendation that -

“ although allowances for Wirral Council's elected members have not been increased for four years, Cabinet recognises the need to remain within public sector pay norms and therefore agrees that Wirral members will only accept a 1.9% increase in the basic allowance with effect from the 1st April 2008. Thereafter, the basic allowance will be updated each year for inflation by the use of the LGA daily rate, as recommended by the Independent Panel”.

2.2 The basis of the 'daily rate' is the LGA's proposition that there should be a significant voluntary element in councillors' work (say 20 hours a month) and that a remuneration scheme should seek to reflect no more than 40 hours effective work per month. The Independent Panel, having considered the options, decided that the remuneration scheme should reflect no more than 40 hours effective work per month (approximately six days) and took the LGA's daily rate of £138.75, as recommended in February 2007. The calculation was as follows:

$$£ 138.75 \div 7.4 \text{ hours} \times 40 \text{ hours} \times 12 \text{ months} = £9,000$$

At the same time the Panel accepted that there were costs in undertaking the role of councillor. It recommended that a sum of £240 be added to recognise the expense element of the allowance, making a total allowance of £9,240 (which the Council subsequently reduced to £9,171).

2.3 The LGA daily rate was revised in March 2008 (see attached letter). That was shortly after the new allowances had been officially published, so no action was taken to implement any further increase at that time.

2.4 I have only just received this year's guidance from the LGA, which is as follows:

This alert updates the LGA guidance on the suggestion that authorities can adopt a "day session" rate when developing and updating their local scheme of allowances for members. The median increase for 2007 [i.e. on the 2007 rate] was 2.9% - we would like to point out that the rate is purely advisory, and local authorities are free to use these or other indices and benchmarks which are appropriate to up-rate member allowance rates.

2.5 It should be noted that, whilst the Panel recommended that allowances should be increased each year by the use of the LGA daily rate, it emphasised that even the decision to update for inflation had to be taken in the context of the financial pressures being faced by the Council.

2.6 The Panel also recommended that the dependant carer's allowance, currently £5.52 per hour, should in future be kept in line with the minimum wage, and this was recently increased to £5.73 per hour (for employees aged 22 and over).

3. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The setting of a members' allowances scheme is a decision for the whole Council, based on recommendations from the Cabinet.

3.2 Any arrangement to implement an up-rating, as allowed by the Scheme, can remain in force for up to four years, i.e. until 2012. No other changes to the Scheme are envisaged by this report, and it was not, therefore, intended to request the Independent Remuneration Panel to meet.

3.3 The minimum wage is set by statute.

4. FINANCE AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Each increase of 1% in the basic allowance would add £8,262 to the members' services budget, based on the current basic allowance and available special responsibility allowances. However, not all of the SRAs are currently taken up, which means that, if an increase of up to 2.9% were recommended, it could be accommodated within the existing budget.

4.2 To date, I cannot recall any instances of a claim being made for the dependant's carer's allowance.

4.3 There may be savings made from any decision to reduce the number of overview and scrutiny committees (the subject of a separate report).

4.4 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None arising directly from this report, other than those covered by the inclusion of a carer's allowance within the Scheme.

6. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None arising from this report

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report affects all members.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None, other than the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and LGA guidance.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the Cabinet consider whether members' allowances should be up-rated for the municipal year 2009/10, in accordance with the approved scheme.

10.2 That, irrespective of the decision in 10.1 above, the dependant carer's allowance be increased to £5.73 per hour.

Bill Norman
Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management

APPENDIX 1

WIRRAL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

December 2007

Introduction.

1. The Panel last reported in 2002 and we are pleased to update our recommendations in the light of that report and the changed conditions being faced by the Council. We do have concerns that the Council has moved away from our recommended approach of a realistic basic allowance and a tight restriction on the number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs). We address these and other issues presented to us by members in this report. Of particular concern to the Panel is the proliferation of SRAs to the extent that these are now payable to a majority of members.
2. Previous Panel reports recommended that Wirral should move to a median position and a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to ensure that this position has been maintained by the Council. Having been made aware of the financial constraints currently faced by the Council we make recommendations that would require only a minimal increase in the budget.
3. We have been made aware of the published material from national bodies and other councils similar to Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council concerning remuneration of councillors including independent studies undertaken for other authorities. Evidence from benchmarking with the non-elected public sector has provided some useful comparisons on remuneration, role and responsibility levels. We have also taken into account the requirements of Government Regulations on Member Allowances.
4. The Independent Panel comprised:

Don Latham, Private Local Government Consultant (Chairman)
Nunzia Bertali, Italian Consul
Pauline Brown, Eclipse Executive Ltd
Ray Allan, 174 Law Solicitors

Andrea Grant, Democratic Services Manager, supported the Panel throughout the review. We would like to record our thanks to her together with the Leader of the Council - Councillor Steve Foulkes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group – Councillor Simon Holbrook, and Leader of the Conservative Group – Councillor Jeff Green, who offered personal evidence in response to our questions.

Summary of findings.

5. The Panel's recommendations are as follows:
 - That the basic allowance be set at £9,240 per annum (currently £9,000)
 - That the basic allowance be updated each year for inflation by the use of the Local Government Association daily rate - issued each February.

- That a revised and restricted range of special responsibility allowances (SRAs) be introduced as set out in paragraphs 10-14.
- That members should continue to be restricted to one SRA.
- That the option to allow members to participate in the local government pensions scheme should not be implemented at this time.
- That there be no change in the basis of payments for travel and subsistence.
- That the Caring Allowance hourly rate be increased from £4.50 to £5.52.

General Commentary and Findings.

6. The Panel made proposals in their previous report that represented a significant shift from SRAs to a higher basic allowance that we still believe represents ‘best practice.’ We also recognised the need to monitor and evaluate the new scheme through the possible introduction of a self- assessment/ appraisal process. The Panel was made aware that the Council has adopted the Improvement and Development Agency charter for member development and that appropriate budget provision is made for member training. But we do not have the evidence that would confirm that less time being spent in meetings; there is more involvement with the community and that a greater diversity in Council membership has been achieved. It was also intended that the new process would result in decision- making being more effective, transparent etc. These were some of the intended outcomes of the new governance arrangements of which the payment of more realistic allowances to members would form an important part. Nevertheless we have kept all these in mind in making our recommendations to the Council.

Basic allowance.

7. The Panel was influenced by work undertaken by other Panels e.g. The Association of London Government (ALG). The ALG report proposed that there should be a significant voluntary element (say 20 hours a month) and that ‘a remuneration scheme should seek to reflect no more than 40 hours effective work per month.’ The Panel having considered the options decided that the remuneration scheme should reflect no more than 40 hours effective work per month. (Approximately six days) We have taken the Local Government Association’s daily rate of £138.75 as recommended in Feb 2007. The calculation is as follows: -

$$£ 138.75 \div 7.4 \text{ hours} \times 40 \text{ hours} \times 12 \text{ months} = £9,000$$

8. Allowances are subject to income tax. However, as the basic allowance is intended to recognise the time devoted by councillors to their work, some incidental costs (e.g. use of their homes and private telephone) may be deducted from the allowance received in calculating how much of the allowance is taxable. This would be subject to agreement of Inland Revenue. Expenses can be offset against tax liability if it can be shown they have been wholly, exclusively, and necessarily, incurred in the performance of duties.
9. We are aware of the costs in undertaking the role of a member. These costs are covered by the basic allowance and some Councils identify a sum within basic allowance to cover such costs. We recommend that a sum of £240 be added to recognise the expense element of the allowance making a **total allowance of £9,240.**

Special Responsibility Allowances.

10. We believe that SRA's should be restricted to the minimum number of councillors. This approach is endorsed by Government Regulations that state that an SRA should be paid only to members who undertake **'significant additional responsibilities.'** The Association of London Government (ALG) report stated that to have more than one third of members with a SRA would be top heavy. The original Welsh Assembly report for the Welsh Unitary authorities was more explicit and recommended a maximum of one third or 20 whichever was the lower. The Government regulations are not explicit but the intention is clear that only a minority of members should be expected to receive an SRA. In our previous report we recommended 25 (38%) but currently the Council scheme provides for 45 (68%).
11. We have specifically addressed issues that would enable the Council to reduce urgently the number of SRA payments and a number of other issues brought to our attention by group leaders. We recommend in line with good practice, that the use of the basic allowance as a multiplier for SRA calculations should continue and we consider that SRAs are set at an appropriate level.
12. We believe the Scrutiny role is a key to the success of the new structure and process but we are concerned that six Select Committees have now transformed into ten Overview and Scrutiny Committees each Committee acting as a shadow of a member of the Cabinet. The intention of the new form of governance was to lessen the time members spend in Committees and members of the Panel were concerned not least at the impact on the Member Allowances Scheme. We were also informed of the creation an Audit Committee in addition to the above 'scrutiny' arrangements. We fully support this development but would question whether the payment of an allowance of £900 for the Chairman is appropriate. If this is a fully functioning Audit Committee we recommend that the Chairman should receive an SRA of £4,500 (50% net basic) equal to that received by Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It would be usual for the major opposition group to play a leading role in the overview and scrutiny process but the Panel were made aware of the special circumstances of the Councils current political management arrangements.
13. Of particular concern is the continuation of the payment of a £900 SRA to 15 members of a 'pool' used to determine Licensing matters. Many Councils made temporary arrangements to pay additional allowances during the period of the implementation of the new Licensing regime but these were short term arrangements and have been discontinued. Other Committees, e.g. Planning, also make heavy demands on member time and the Panel does not consider that these exceptional payments to members of Licensing Committee should continue. We strongly recommend that these SRA payments be discontinued.
14. We recommend that when the Chairmanship of the Standards Board is undertaken by an independent member (commonly regarded as good practice) that the Council should consider increasing the allowance from £900 to say £1,350 (15% net basic)
15. The Panel recommends, in line with current practice, that an individual councillor is restricted from claiming more than one allowance.

Updating.

16. The allowances have been updated in line with the median white-collar wage, as notified by the LGA in February 2007. We recommend that allowances should be increased each year by the use of the LGA daily rate. The Panel recognises that even the decision to update for inflation has to be taken in the context of the financial pressures being faced by the Council. Our proposals would add £6,390 (net) to the current Council budget.

Pensions.

17. Strong representations were made to the Panel that members should be allowed to join the Local Government Pensions scheme. We would particularly like to thank those members who provided detailed information in writing. We particularly noted the fact that as the administrator of the Pension Fund Wirral Metropolitan Borough is the only Merseyside Authority whose members are not allowed to participate. Nevertheless the views of the Panel remain unchanged that it is not appropriate to introduce pension provision at this time as it was felt that the overall package of allowances was sufficient and that the addition of a small pension, at quite considerable potential cost to the Council and taxpayers, would not particularly encourage younger people to stand for Councillor. Panel members expressed concern that the provision of pensions also implied employment rather than public service where a large voluntary component is integral to the role of the Councillor. The Panel was also mindful of the Council's need for financial prudence and that nationally, mainly due to the large number of Councils yet to introduce a scheme, only 5% of members are participating.

Travel and subsistence.

18. The Panel fully endorse the Councils arrangements for travel and subsistence especially the use of 40p for member mileage. We recommend no change in the basis of the allowances other than that they should be increased appropriately each year for inflation.

Caring Allowance.

19. The Panel welcomes the introduction of a caring allowance. This is in accord with 'best practice' and we recommend that the hourly rate of £4.50 be increased and in future kept in line with the minimum wage – currently £5.52.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

CHANGE PROGRAMME

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents an update on the change programme agreed by Cabinet on 10 December 2008.
- 1.2 It recommends an enhanced Strategic Change Programme comprising six sub-programmes, and explains how the programme will be managed in a consistent, efficient and effective way.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed a change programme on 10 December 2008 built around the following areas:

- **Customer Access Strategy (CAS):** initially using Streetscene Services
- **Common Administrative Processes (CAP):** including the key projects of the new Highways and Engineering Services contract arrangements (HESPE), Human Capital Management (HCM) [Human Resources and Payroll] and Integrated Financial Systems (IFS). The processes provide the Council with the potential for gaining efficiencies and improvements without any negative impact on front line services.
- **Strategic Asset Review (SAR):** this is subject to a separate reporting process, and will be a catalyst for changing how people work and how services are accessed.
- **ICT Technological Developments (ICT):** the work necessary to keep computers and software functioning and up to date.

- 2.2 Following further consideration by Chief Officers and the Corporate Improvement Group (CIG), it is proposed to add a further two programmes to the overall programme:

- **Adult Social Services Transformation Programme (DASS)**
- **Building Schools for the Future (BSF)**

These programmes are integral to the Council ambition to be recognised as an excellent Council.

- 2.3 The purpose of the programme is to improve services within available resources and within approved timescales

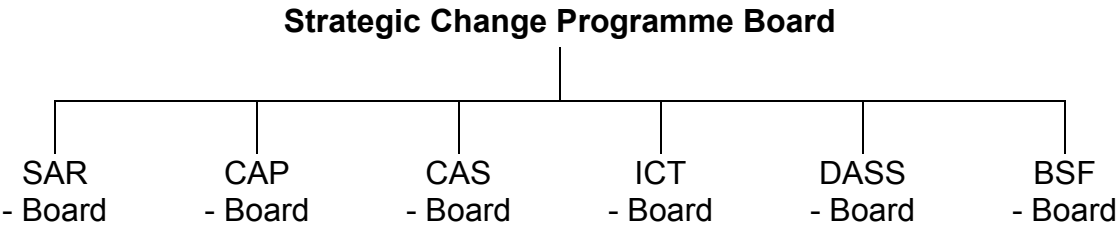
- 2.4 The programme is built upon the principles of:
- Modernised, fit for purpose business processes, enabling service improvements
 - Automation of administrative processes
 - Robust, standardised Council-wide procedures for accessing and storing information.

- 2.5 Cabinet recognised that, for the Change Programme to be effective there is a need:
- at the highest level, to focus on identifying improvements and the timescales in which they could be delivered,
 - corporately, to integrate programmes which are currently being developed or managed within departments within this programme
 - for programme management to ensure that all projects and resources are co-ordinated,
 - at an operational level, to task individuals with delivering individual projects within the timeframe identified,
 - for programme assurance to ensure that appropriate processes are in place to enable delivery of the agreed programme,
 - to bring together staff with the necessary skills to deliver the programme within the timescales indicated.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Programme Board

- 3.1 A Strategic Change Programme (SCP) Board has been created to oversee the programme. Each of the six individual programmes will report to the SCP Board.



3.2 The SCP Board has the following membership:

<u>Chair</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Chief Executive • Head of Marketing and PR • Director of Finance • Director of Law, HR & Asset Management 	<p>On behalf of the Members and Chief Executive responsible for ensuring delivery of the overall programme to timescale and within agreed resources.</p> <p>Corporate communications expertise</p> <p>Corporate Financial expertise</p> <p>As Monitoring Officer & Chief Legal Officer, and separate from role as Project Manager of SAR</p>
<u>Assurance</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Regeneration • Deputy Director of Finance 	<p>Expertise of significant corporate change</p> <p>Independent of SCP Board</p>

3.3 The Programme Board represents the interests of the business and users, and provides overall direction and management of the project. The Board is responsible for the programme and also for assurance that the programme remains on course to deliver the desired outcomes.

3.4 Programme assurance is independent of the Programme Board and covers all aspects of the programme including business, users and, where appropriate, suppliers. The role helps ensure the integrity of the programme by continuing to validate the programme business case against external events, programme risks and against the high-level plan, to ensure both viability and value for money. The Assurance Officer will report to the Chief Executive if there are issues which the Programme Board is not addressing correctly.

Management of Each Project

3.5 Each individual programme will be managed as follows:

Programme	Comments	Mentor	Programme Manager
Strategic Asset Review (SAR)		Steve Maddox	Bill Norman
Common Administrative Processes (CAP)	Highways and Engineering Services Integrated Financial Systems Human Capital Management	Jim Wilkie	David Green Bob Neeld Jacqui Roberts
Customer Access (CAS)	Initially Streetscene	Alan Stennard	Malcolm Flanagan
Information Technology Developments (ICT)		Ian Coleman	John Carruthers
Adult Social Services (DASS) Transformation		John Webb	Chris Batman
Building Schools for the Future (BSF)		Howard Cooper	David Armstrong

3.6 Each project will be responsible for its own project governance but it must be within the agreed framework for project management. i.e. there will be a formal board and a nominated project manager and independent assurance. The programme manager will report to the SCP Board on progress relating to his/her specific project.

a. Mentor

Has ultimate accountability for the success of the project, ensuring it remains value for money whilst balancing the needs of the Council, users and (if appropriate) suppliers.

b. Project Manager

The Project Manager runs the project on a day-to-day basis on behalf of the Project Board. The prime responsibility is to ensure that the project delivers the required products to the required standard of quality and within the specified constraints of time and cost.

c. Project Assurance

Project Assurance provides the check that the project continues to meet its specification, the required standards and the Business Case.

3.7 The proposals outlined above follow PRINCE 2 principles, as adopted by the Council, and incorporate the principles of the gateway process as successfully used by the Council in its management of the HESPE (Highways and Engineering Services project) process.

3.8 These proposals are consistent with the recommendations from the Audit Commission report on Benefits Realisation and Change Management considered by Cabinet on 7 February 2008.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 An initial seminar was held with all senior officers involved in the management of the Strategic Change Programme on 3 April 2009, to agree how the programme will be managed, with the first meeting of the SCP Board on 7 April 2009. The Board has begun an initial assessment of the position of each of the individual programmes, in order to identify key risks and issues and to enhance the process of corporate co-ordination.

4.2 Individual programme managers are in the process of confirming key criteria to the SCP Board. These include:

- Programme Objectives
- What the programme will deliver and when
- Who is responsible for the various elements of the programme
- How the manager is planning to deliver the programme
- What constraints there are for the manager in delivering the programme
- Financial and other resource implications

4.3 It is proposed to report quarterly to Cabinet, in line with the financial and performance monitoring cycle. The next report will be due in July 2009.

5 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The Change Programme may have significant implications across the Council. These will be clarified at the scoping stage of each project.

6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are none arising from this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are none arising from this report.

10 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising from this report.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.

13 RECOMMENDATION

13.1 That Cabinet approves the enhanced Strategic Change Programme including the management and reporting arrangements.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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CABINET – 23rd APRIL, 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ALLOCATION OF EARLY YEARS QUALITY AND ACCESS CAPITAL GRANT TO PROVIDERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report requests Cabinet approval for Early Years capital grants. These grants will support investment in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.

1.0 Background

Surestart funding for Early Years Quality and Access is included in the Children and Young People's Capital Programme. The grant is for £1,238,960 in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

1.1 The DCSF Early Years Capital Grant has three aims:

To improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings
To ensure all children, including disabled children are able to access provision
To enable PVI providers to deliver the extension of the free offer for 3 and 4 year olds and to do so flexibly.

The DCSF expectation is that the majority of the capital grant is used to improve the quality of the environment in PVI settings, both to support higher quality experiences for young children and ensure that all children can access services.

1.2 The Cabinet Report of 16th October 2008 agreed that half of the funding available in 2008-09 and 2009-10 should be used to fund works and/or supply packages of equipment to PVI groups, with all groups being invited to bid and the bids being scored against the DCSF guidance for the capital grant in respect of Quality, Access and Delivering the Free Entitlement. The remainder will be used to replace accommodation located on school sites. The 2008/09 scheme will replace accommodation at Brookhurst Primary and Brackenwood Infant Schools.

The new capital funding stream has the potential to secure the long term future of these groups and greatly improve the experiences, environment and safety and well-being of the young people and the adults who make up those groups. Providers were asked to bid for amounts between £2500 to £10,000, against the following priorities for development:

- Outdoor Learning
- Information Technology
- Equipment to support effective teaching and learning

- 1.3 Bids were invited from all 122 PVI providers, of those submitted, bids from 83 providers are recommended based upon the information provided. Providers could make up to three bids:

	<i>Number of applications</i>	<i>Total amount</i>
Outdoor Learning	77	£521,696
Information Technology	48	£100,656
Resources/ Furniture	29	£108,588
	Total approvals	£730, 940

Providers will be invited to bid again later in 2009 and in 2010.

The criteria for selection focussed around the following priorities:-

- Plans to develop outdoor learning environments that will enhance learning and development for young children
- Development of Information Technology to improve access to digital technology for children and staff.
- Purchase of furniture and other resources to enhance the learning environment in line with the principles of Effective Teaching and Learning.

Settings were required to demonstrate:-

Ofsted report – satisfactory or better

Clear justification for spend in line with improving outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage as defined above

Support and endorsement from the setting Foundation Consultant

Secure financial position to ensure longer term sustainability.

The applications proposed for approval are set out in Appendix A.

2.0 **Financial and Staffing Implications**

The bids totalling £730,940 can be met from within the approved Children and Young People's Capital Programme for 2008-09 and 2009-10. Funding is from a ring fenced Capital Grant. Appropriate procedures will be put in place to monitor spending against allocations to individual groups.

3.0 **Staffing Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report. The grant is to be managed within existing staffing resources.

4.0 **Equal Opportunities Implications**

This initiative forms part of the strategy to ensure "sufficient provision, distributed appropriately across the authority to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable access by all to Early Years Services". (DCSF guidance)

5.0 **Community Safety Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

6.0 Local Agenda Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

7.0 Planning Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

8.0 Anti-Poverty Implications and Social Inclusion Implications

The capital proposals in this report are intended to secure and support early years education and support for all children and families, which in turn contribute to the Anti-Poverty Strategy. All PVI settings are required to have an inclusion policy setting out “how they will meet the needs of all children” (DCSF guidance).

9.0 Local Member Support Implications

Capital Funding has been bid for by PVI groups across the borough.

10.0 Background Papers

DCSF Capital Grant guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i) That the Capital Grants as set out in Appendix A be approved.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children’s Services

Appendix A

Quality Improvement Grant - Approvals April 2009

Name of Nursery/Pre-School	Outdoor Learning £	I.T equipment £	Resources/ furniture £	Total £
Ash House Nursery	10,000	0	0	10,000
Avalon	10,000	0	0	10,000
Barnston Buddies	0	10,000	0	10,000
Bethany Day Nursery Ltd	9931	0	0	9,931
Bidston Avenue Early Years Pre-School	7339	2000	0	9,339
Bluebells (Beb)	6784	1300	1916	10,000
Bluebells (Brom)	2465	1499	6036	10,000
Bright Smiles Day Nursery	8000	1000	1000	10,000
Brookdale Pre-School	500	0	9500	10,000
Brookhurst Pre School Group	0	3550	0	3,550
Building Blocks Day Nursery	0	1600	8229	9,829
Christ the King Pre-school	7000	3000	0	10,000
Daisy Day Nursery	9700	0	0	9,700
Ducklings (Hoylake)	4922	4922	0	9844
Ducklings Day Nursery (Moreton)	5417	2713	0	8,130
Esholt Day Nursery	9800	0	0	9,800
Eversley Nursery School	3952	3676	2350	9,978
First Class Nursery School (Wirral) Ltd	10,000	0	0	10,000
First Steps Playgroup H.M.C.	1500	1033	0	2,533
Funtrain Day Nursery	2704	1039	6257	10,000
Gayton Pre-school	6379	1780	0	8159

Greasby Infant Pre-School	4800	400	4800	10,000
Greasby Playgroup	2021	559	5123	7,703
Great Meols Pre-School	6690	3065	0	9,755
Greenleas Pre-School	8270	1200	433	9,903
Harrison Day Nursery Ltd	9905	0	0	9,905
Holy Trinity Pre School, Hoylake	5388	2077	2217	9,682
Honeybees Nursery	2985	4821	0	7,806
Birkenhead and Tranmere Children's Centre				
Jack and Jill Day Nursery (Oxton)	9995	0	0	9,995
Kiddy Factory Oxton	6135	3857	0	9,992.00
Kingfisher Day Nursery	9995	0	0	9,995
Kingsmead School	6944	245	0	7,189
Ladymount Catholic Primary Pre-School	8274	1726	0	10,000
Leapfrog Day Nursery	6050	0	0	6,050
Little Acorns Pre-School	7037	2775	0	9,812
Little Cherubs Day Nursery	8600	1400	0	10,000
Little Cherubs Day Nursery (Formerly Yew Tree)	7575	2000	0	9,575
Little Monkeys Day Nursery	7035	0	0	7,035
Little Rainbows	8730	1270	0	10,000
Little Robins Nursery	10,000	0	0	10,000
Manor Childcare Centre	2345	4000	3655	10,000
Marigold Day Nursery Ltd	10,000	0	0	10,000
Mary Manor Nursery	4187	555	3743	8,485
Miriam Place Nursery,	6080	3364	0	9,444
Moreton Early Years Playgroup	3700	950	3227	7,877

Oakdale Children's Nursery	0	0	3824	3,824
Our Lady of Pity Annexe Pre School	9963	0	0	9,963
Our Lady of Pity Pre-School	9800	0	0	9,800
Park Wood Day Nursery	6500	1500	2000	10,000
Parkside Day Nursery	3783	3799	2394	9,976
Plymyard Pre School	5451	870	3679	10,000
Prenton Methodist Church Playgroup	3900	0	0	3,900
Prenton Preparatory School	0	2416	5466	7,882
Prenton Pre-school (Northwood)	4997	0	0	4997
Prenton Pre-School H.B.P.G.	1420	3375	2647	7,442
Pudsey Day Nursery	10,000	0	0	10,000
Rainbow Pre School Playgroup	2000	0	7930	9,930
Redcourt St Anselm's	10,000	0	0	10,000
Riverbank	3340	0	4657	7,997
Smarties	8500	1500	0	10,000
Somerville Pre-school	4697	534	2557	7788
St Agnes Pre-school	5750	700	0	6450
St John's Pre School Playgroup	9200	0	0	9,200
St Peter's RC	8842	160	960	9962
St Peter's CE Pre School	7017	1055	0	8,072
St. Andrew's Pre-School Playgroup	10,000	0	0	10,000
St. Chad's Playgroup	8055	0	0	8,055
Summerhill Day Nursery	7745	2244	0	9,989
Sunny Days Pre-School	3108	370	0	3,478
The Learning Tree	10,000	0	0	10,000
The Priory Pre-	10,000	0	0	10,000

School				
The Waterside Day Nursery	5689	0	1952	7,641
Thingwall Pre-School and Playgroup	4750	0	0	4,750
Thornton Hough Pre-School/Playgroup	5997	0	0	5,997
Three Gable Day Nursery	9672	0	0	9,672
Townfield Ted's	0	5000	5000	10,000
Treetops @ Carlton House	9523	0	0	9,523
Upton St. Mary's Pre-School	6000	635	3365	10,000
Vale Kids Pre-School	4500	500	2365	7,365
Wendy House	7514	0	0	7,514
Windmill Day Nursery (Claughton CC)	5533	2000	1306	8839
Wirral Christian Centre	10,000	0	0	10,000
Woodland Day Nursery	9316	622	0	9,938
Totals	521,696	100656	108588	730,940

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

COMMISSIONING CRITERIA FOR UNIVERSAL, OPEN ACCESS YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents Cabinet with the proposed commissioning criteria which are to underpin the process for the commissioning of Super Centre Youth Clubs and the provision of Positive Activities for Young People. Cabinet are asked to adopt both commissioning frameworks and to agree the proposed timetable for the commissioning process.

1. Background

Cabinet at its meeting on 27 November recommended that work should be undertaken to reconfigure the Youth Service to align it to the current District structure. Cabinet also recommended that as part of the future arrangements for service provision, work should be undertaken to have an operating structure that ensured there would be a youth centre in each of the eleven Area Forum areas.

In recognition of awareness generated from the submission of the My Place proposal and the proposals contained in HM Treasury's report: Aiming High a Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), Cabinet recommended that the reorganisation of youth clubs should move to a configuration over time that results in a structure that has one large hub or super centre in each of the districts and seven satellites. The hubs will operate over six nights including Friday and Saturday and the satellites will operate over three nights. In the first instance it is intended as part of the commissioning process to identify an additional two Super Centres alongside the previously identified centres at Wallasey Fire Station and Shaftesbury Youth Club and when these are established to consider at a future date commissioning for the seven satellites.

As part of the Aiming High Proposals, additional money has been made available to local authorities under Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP). This funding has previously been routed through Connexions and was used to provide a number of support packages for young people at risk of truanting, offending, negative peer group pressure and associated health risks. Specific activities were commissioned to engage the young people during school holidays, in structured learning opportunities and for an agreed number of hours per week. Key workers have been employed to ensure the young people are provided with appropriate support and to enable the young people to maximise the opportunities presented by this programme. There is an expectation within Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) that a similar programme will be commissioned in the new funding arrangements.

In 2008-09 the funding available was £339K, in 2009-10 this is increased by £243K to £582,000 and by £417K to £756,000 in 2010/11. Guidance produced by the DCSF makes clear that this uplift in funding is to support targeted and universal week-end diversionary activities for young people and to positively impact on a number of priorities such as a reduction in teenage pregnancy, first time entrants into the Youth Justice System, a reduction in NEET and family intervention support programmes. Decisions are required regarding the commissioning of services covered by this funding stream. It is right that as Cabinet are

considering the how youth clubs will operate some consideration is given to how PAYP is commissioned.

The funding allocated under PAYP will be allocated through a commissioning process. As outlined in previous paragraphs it is essential that these funding streams are used to ensure that activities are complementary and make an impact on the priorities identified in 1.4. Appendix B is the draft commissioning criteria for the commissioning of services which are provided in response to external and internal policy initiatives.

In implementing the Cabinet's recommendations, officers from the Children and Young People's Department have undertaken a number of consultation meetings with young people, staff, representatives' of management committees on two occasions. During the second meeting, the management committee representatives were asked for their comments on the draft commissioning framework and in addition to engaging with this process, they expressed an interest in how they may work more collaboratively. There have been two meetings with the Trade Unions and at both meetings there has been consultation on the impact of the proposals and the draft commissioning framework. In addition to these meetings there have been presentations to a Neighbourhood Pathfinder and the Birkenhead District Board. The meetings provided opportunities for all stakeholders to be briefed on the reconfiguration and also to identify the criteria that should be included in the commissioning framework. Attached as Appendix A is the Draft criteria to be used when commissioning of youth clubs. There are a number of essential criteria and these seek to ensure that quality standards regarding the qualification of staff and capacity to engage with the district requirements can be met. Essentially, the criteria will be used to determine which centres will be used as either a Hub or a Satellite.

Staff already employed in youth clubs will be included as part of the resource available to the commissioned organisations. In the event that an organisation with staff is not commissioned, staff employed in that setting will be redeployed to a commissioned club. There will not be any redundancies and discussions are currently ongoing with the trade unions to identify any issues that may surface during this time.

The funding allocated under PAYP will be allocated through a commissioning process. As outlined in previous paragraphs it is essential that these funding streams are used to ensure that activities are complementary and make an impact on the priorities identified in 1.3. Appendix B is the draft commissioning criteria for the commissioning of services which are provided in response to external and internal policy initiatives.

2. Next Steps

If the Commissioning Criteria are approved by Cabinet the process of commissioning will start. It is anticipated that this will take up to four months with final decisions made by the end of August. The key tasks to be completed are as follows:

- Finalise Commissioning Brief
- Advertise tender
- Procurement Workshop – to explain the process to potential bidders.
- Closing Date for Pre Qualifying Questionnaire/ Tender (4 weeks)
- Tender Evaluation Stage 1 Short listing (PQQ / Tender Desk top evaluation) 2 weeks
- Notify short listed providers- invitation to interview
- Tender Evaluation Stage 2 – Interviews
- Report to Chair of the Procurement Panel
- Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board
- Cabinet Report recommending contract award

- Contract Awarded following Cabinet Call-in period

2.2 A transparent process is essential and in line with current practice there should be a Commissioning Group to steer the process. In recognition of the sensitivities, it is proposed that the commission group's membership should include representatives from organisations that have an interest in the agenda for young people but not providers of services. With this in mind representation from the following organisations/ departments is proposed

- Police/ Community Safety
- Fire & Rescue
- Link Forum
- 14-19 Partnership/LSC
- PCT- Strategic Lead
- Neighbourhood Pathfinder Organisation
- Children and Young People's Department
- Representative from Transport
- Members of the Executive Youth Board
- Extended Schools link
- Member of staff from Strategic Asset Review Team

3. What will be commissioned?

3.1 In the first instance the commissioning process will focus on establishing the four hubs. Once those hubs have been established at a future date a further commissioning round will take place to identify satellite provision. Shaftesbury Youth Club and Wallasey Fire Station have already been named as two of the hubs leaving a hub to be identified in both West Wirral and South Wirral.

3.2 The Belvidere Centre is open four evenings a week and caters mainly for young people with physical disabilities but also has non disabled members. There are also members with slight learning difficulties. One evening a week is used mainly by young people with Aspergers syndrome but any member may attend. Callister Youth Club opens two nights a week and its target group is Hearing Impaired, it is also attended by young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Both clubs have been in operation for some time and before progressing to commissioning for Special Needs provision it would be prudent to undertake some needs assessment to establish what is required and what will be commissioned. Therefore I am proposing that the commissioning for these youth clubs is deferred until the four super centres and seven satellites have been established to allow for the necessary needs assessment to be completed and I will be seeking Cabinet's agreement for this proposal. There are some youth clubs that within their youth offer run a night for Special Needs provision. Where this is the case, the provision will be retained as an additional night within the commissioning arrangements. This situation will be reviewed as part of the Special Needs assessment process.

3.3 This process is about commissioning of youth clubs, what is not being included is the Curriculum Development Service and the Outreach Team. The Curriculum Development service (CDS) includes the Youth Theatre, Response, Duke of Edinburgh, Participation and Special Needs/ International work. The Outreach team is a borough wide team currently deployed to a number of localities and works with young people in street settings. There are a number of areas that require further consideration and therefore the work of the CDS and the Outreach Team will be subject to review at a later stage. The reconfiguration of the youth service seeks to align the Service to the District structure. The Outreach Team will be aligned to the

district structure and will be central to any arrangements regarding the engagement of young people who are disengaged and at risk. Although the Outreach team will be deployed to the districts there will still be a link with the main Youth Service. The commissioning arrangements will apply to the youth clubs currently funded directly by Wirral or by grant aid. Within current provision, Belvidere Youth Club operates specifically for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities and the Callister Club provides for young people who are Hearing Impaired.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The required savings of £150,000 have now been identified. However in order to meet this requirement it will be necessary to re-distribute staff time across the current centres.

5. Staffing Implications

- 5.1 The proposals for the new structure can be met from within existing staffing levels. Some staff will be required to relocate to other youth clubs and any one relocated will be entitled to disturbance allowance.

6. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 6.1 The proposals for the reconfiguration of the Service and the Commissioning Criteria for Targeted and Universal Services seek to improve the quality of service provision and have more engagement with vulnerable young people.

7. Community Safety Implications

- 7.1 The work undertaken by commissioned and non commissioned services will be planned to reduce the number of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System and thereby reduce community safety issues.

8. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9. Planning Implications

- 9.1 There may be a need for planning permission in the development of Hubs but that requirement will not be confirmed until commissioned clubs have been identified.

10. Anti Poverty Implications

- 10.1 The improved Youth Offer will enable young people to access accreditation opportunities and enhance their training and development opportunities.

11. Social Inclusion Implications

- 11.1 The aim of targeted and universal provision is to promote greater social inclusion. Planning for youth clubs at district level will be in response to needs assessment.

12. Local Member Support Implications

- 12.1 This report affects all wards.

13. Background papers

- Cabinet Report 27 November 2008
- Aiming High – The Treasury’s Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That

- 1) Cabinet approves the criteria for the commissioning of youth clubs and Targeted and Universal youth services.
- 2) Cabinet agrees to the proposed assessment of Special Needs provision.
- 3) Cabinet approves the implementation of the Commissioning arrangements for both Youth Centres and Positive Activities for Young people with the first round of commissioning focussing on the identification of a further two Super Centres.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children’s Services

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APPENDIX A

Commissioning criteria for commissioning of youth club provision

Organisations must demonstrate the following criteria if they are to be considered for short listing:

In responding to each criteria, organisations are expected to consider equality issues as they apply to each section.

Values, Aims and Objectives

- Evidence of how service provision is supporting the Integrated Youth Support Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.
- Young people influencing the planning, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Evidence of effective planning to address indicators of deprivation.
- Evidence of youth service provision for Looked After young people, young people with Learning Disabilities and Difficulties or other vulnerable young people

An organisation that is working towards delivering high quality provision and is outward looking.

Understanding of the requirements

- Demonstrate value for money in provision of universal/ targeted youth work. This is to include open youth work and an agreed number of planned group work sessions which will be linked to local policy issues such as teenage pregnancy and the Respect agenda.
- Recording systems of attendances by young people at different projects. – This system to be compliant with local authority requirements regarding unique individuals.
- Provision of youth services that ensure outputs linked to national Key Performance Indicators underpinning Targeted Youth Support, Integrated Youth Support and Participation indicators.
- Centre based managers to have as minimum qualification –NVQ level 3 Youth Work qualification
- Evidence of effective planning to address indicators of deprivation.
- Evidence of how service provision supporting the Integrated Youth Support Strategy.
- Provision of four hub youth centres operating six nights per week including Friday and Saturday.
- Provision of seven satellite youth centres operating three nights per week.

Track record

- Evidence of effective planning to address indicators of deprivation.
- Experience of successful external funding applications.

- Evidence of partnership working across organisations to further develop youth services for young people.
- Evidence of consortium approaches to planning and delivery of services.
- Evidence of previous investment in service provision for young people.
- Evidence of positive outcomes for young people being delivered.

Delivery concept

- Young people influencing the planning, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Demonstrate value for money in provision of universal/ targeted youth work. This is to include open youth work and an agreed number of planned group work sessions which will be linked to local policy issues such as teenage pregnancy and the Respect agenda.
- Provision accessible to public transport routes.
- Evidence of programme planning to meet local /district needs
- Evidence of how service provision supporting the Integrated Youth Support Strategy.

Quality and training

- Centre based managers to have as minimum qualification –NVQ level 3 Youth Work qualification
- Programme of staff development to increase the number of professionally qualified youth workers.

Commissioning Group

To ensure there is a broad range of experience available to guide the process there will be a number of organisations/ agencies represented on the Commissioning Group. This group will assess all applications including those from organisations not invited for interview.

- Police/ Community Safety
- Fire & Rescue
- Link Forum
- 14-19 Partnership/LSC
- PCT- Strategic Lead
- Neighbourhood Pathfinder Organisation
- C&YPD
- Representative from Transport
- Members of the Executive Youth Board
- Extended Schools link
- Member of Staff from Strategic Asses Review Team.

Steering Group

The membership for this group will be drawn from the Integrated Youth Support Strategy Group. This group will advise on the development of the commissioning framework. The membership will broadly reflect the

organisations that have responsibility for national Key Performance Indicators and Local Area Agreement targets.

Commissioning Process / Timeline

Commissioning Framework drafted mid February 2009

Consultation on Commissioning Framework mid February – Mid March

Report to Cabinet/ Overview & Scrutiny/ YAPSAC April/ May 2009

Advertise commissioning round – timescale to be agreed

Proposals from organisations - TBA

Involvement by District Board representatives and elected members – after initial short listing by Commissioning Group

Commissioning process June/ July

Final report to Cabinet July/ August 2009

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APPENDIX B

Commissioning Framework for additional targeted and universal youth support services

Background

The agenda for youth support services is expanding. Following the publication of Aiming High a Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities, there is an increased expectation of the contribution youth services can make to the lives of young people. This expectation has been matched by a number of external funding regimes that are to provide targeted interventions in the lives of young people. Specifically these are:

- Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) – this funding has previously been routed through Connexions. The key requirement was to engage with young people at risk and also young people not engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). This funding is now funded directly to local authorities via the Area Based Grant (ABG). The base budget for this activity is £339K with an additional uplift of £243 in 09/10 and £417K in 10/11
- Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) – this funding from DCSF is intended to engage with young people, at risk of or already involved in criminal activity, through a programme of family intervention and Challenge and Support YOT workers and other professionals work to support the known young people away from criminal activity. YCAP also funds diversionary youth activities on Friday and Saturday nights. Currently this money has been allocated through a commissioning process managed by Connexions. The amount allocated for this work is £350K a year for two years starting in 09/10. Fifty percent of this money must be allocated on the YCAP/ Family Intervention Programme and £175K or fifty percent to be allocated if agreed to one or a number of the following:
 1. Police Officers in Schools
 2. Staying Safe
 3. Friday/ Saturday night provision and reparation
 4. Youth Outreach
 5. YOT Officers in custody suites
- Youth Capital Plus (YCP) – this funding is to be used to fund the development of a youth facility. The location of the facility has been determined by a mapping process which has highlighted youth disorder hot spot areas. Wallasey Fire Station is the venue that will be developed as the facility to be developed by YCP.

There is an expectation that the development of services for young people should be guided by a commissioning process. It is essential that any commissioning process is joined up and that services commissioned form a continuum of provision that operates from universal provision to targeted support. The main driver of the provision is to provide appropriate targeted

support and also a robust universal provision that is attractive to young people as an alternative to risk taking behaviours.

The following is suggested as an approach to the future commissioning of services linked to PAYP and YCAP.

Organisations must demonstrate the following criteria if they are to be short listing:

Understanding of the requirements:

- Young people influencing the planning, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Successfully meet the requirements of the Pre Qualifying Questionnaire Method Statement (PQQ)
- Demonstrate value for money in provision of universal/ targeted youth work. This is to include open youth work and an agreed number of planned group work sessions which will be linked to local policy issues such as teenage pregnancy and the Respect agenda.
- Recording systems of attendances by young people at different projects. – This system to be compliant with local authority requirements regarding unique individuals.
- Provision accessible to public transport routes.
- Provision of youth services that ensure outputs linked to national Key Performance Indicators underpinning Targeted Youth Support, Integrated Youth Support and Participation indicators

Track Record:

- Evidence of programme planning to meet local /district needs
- Experience of successful external funding applications.
- Experience of partnership working across organisations to further develop youth services for young people.
- Evidence of consortium approaches to planning and delivery of services.

Delivery Concept

- Young people influencing the planning, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Be fully accessible for young people who are Looked After or who have learning Difficulties and Disabilities.
- Provision that is supporting the Integrated Youth Support Strategy
- Demonstrate value for money in provision of universal/ targeted youth work.

Commissioning Group

To ensure there is a broad range of experience available to guide the process there will be a number of organisations/ agencies represented on the Commissioning Group. This group will assess all applications including those from organisations not invited for interview.

- Police/ Community Safety
- Fire & Rescue
- Link Forum
- 14-19 Partnership/LSC
- PCT- Strategic Lead
- Neighbourhood Pathfinder Organisation
- C&YPD
- Representative from Transport
- Members of the Executive Youth Board

Steering Group

The membership for this group will be drawn from the Integrated Youth Support Strategy Group. This group will advise on the development of the commissioning framework. The membership will broadly reflect the organisations that have responsibility for national Key Performance Indicators and Local Area Agreement targets.

Commissioning Process

Commissioning Framework drafted mid February 2009
Consultation on Commissioning Framework mid February – Mid March
Report to Cabinet/ Overview & Scrutiny/ YAPSAC – April/ May 2009
Advertise commissioning round – timescale to be agreed
Proposals from organisations - TBA

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23rd APRIL

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

IMPROVING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 25th, 2008 two separate reports were presented to Cabinet regarding ways in which special school provision, primary and secondary, for pupils with complex learning difficulties on Wirral might be improved. At that meeting members gave approval for further investigations and consultation to take place. This report advises members of the outcomes of those investigations and consultations and proposes further action to improve the provision made for these pupils.

Wirral currently maintains 5 schools for with children with complex learning difficulties, three primary and two secondary. All the schools are highly regarded by parents and rated by OFSTED as either outstanding or good with outstanding features.

Nonetheless only two of the schools were purpose built originally and all have limitations in terms of their design, structure and physical environment. Early discussions with head teachers, parents and governors identified ways in which new build schools could greatly enhance the learning environment provided for pupils, increase accessibility and opportunities, where appropriate for, inclusion, improve and extend the range of curriculum and leisure opportunities and bring together the full range of services necessary for the children and their families.

During the course of the consultation process Wirral has been advised of its allocation of Building Schools for the Future monies and these, combined with funds available from the Learning and Skills Council, will enable us to build new 21st century schools, which are genuinely fit for the future and will provide up to date facilities for some of our most vulnerable pupils. Co-location of these schools on mainstream sites will facilitate greater inclusion both within education and within the wider community. They will also provide a learning pathway from childhood to adulthood by raising aspirations, expectations and opportunities whilst still providing a protective environment where necessary.

The consultation process has been lengthy and extensive and it will not stop after Cabinet's decisions. It is important that we continue to work closely with pupils, parents, schools and other stakeholders if we are genuinely to achieve our aims.

Background

1.1 The Local Authority currently maintains 5 special schools, 3 primary and 2 secondary, for pupils who experience complex learning difficulties (CLD). These schools meet the needs of pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Such children require a highly modified and developmentally oriented curriculum rather than simple differentiated access to the national curriculum. Many of the pupils have significant additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorder, medical and physical needs and sensory disabilities.

1.2 All the schools concerned, Ellera Park, Stanley and The Lyndale at primary and Foxfield and Meadowside at secondary are considered by Ofsted to be either excellent or good with outstanding features. Nonetheless earlier consultations with parents, head teachers and governors have identified that the schools could improve the provision they make if they were provided with more up to date and purpose designed premises. .

1.3 Currently the schools provide for the following range of pupil need (pupil's primary need as identified by the schools):

	NOR	ASD	BESD	MLD	PMLD	SLCN	SLD	VI
School								
Ellera	79	0	0	0	12	0	67	0
Lyndale	32	0	0	1	18	0	13	0
Stanley	87	1	0	0	0	1	85	0
Foxfield	129	10	1	1	12	0	103	2
M'side	78	9	2	4	17	5	41	0

Please note

NOR – number on roll

ASD – autistic spectrum disorder

BESD – behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties

MLD – moderate-learning difficulties

PMLD – profound and multiple learning difficulties

SLCN – speech, language and communication needs

SLD – severe learning difficulties

VI – visual impairment

Members will see from the above that in any future developments we will need to provide for the needs of approximately 200 children in both the primary and secondary sectors. Despite the general fall in pupil numbers across the Wirral overall these numbers have remained fairly stable over time. Members will also be able to see the range of need for which each of our special schools for CLD provides.

The Consultation Process

2.1 At the meeting of 25th September members gave approval for, in the primary sector;

“A formal review of the provision the Authority makes for primary aged children who have complex learning difficulties. Such a review would be completed in March 2009 when a further report would be submitted to Cabinet”;

“This review would include a widespread consultation with all stakeholders and the assurance that any development would be an improvement on the current high quality provision”.

And in the secondary sector;

“Undertake a feasibility study exercise to identify the practical and financial implications of amalgamating Foxfield School and Meadowside School”.

“An extensive consultation exercise with pupils, parents and all other relevant stakeholders to gauge wider support for the amalgamation of Foxfield School and Meadowside School and the establishment of a single, split site, 11-19 provision for pupils with complex learning difficulties”.

“Undertake a detailed exploration with the Learning and Skills Council of the feasibility of developing a post-16 facility, which is co-located with a local college”.

2.2. The consultation process commenced in October 2008 with the publication of two documents;

“Special School Provision for Pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties - The Future of Primary CLD Provision in Wirral”, and,

“Special School Provision for Pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties – The Future of Secondary CLD Provision in Wirral”.

These documents, which contained response forms for recipients to complete, are available to members on CD along with the written records of the consultation process.

These two documents were distributed to, and views were sought from, a wide range of stakeholders, including parents, governors, teachers and other staff, health, social care, unions, transport etc. regarding a number of proposals generated from earlier discussions:

These were -

At primary;

Option 1 Rebuild all three existing schools as generic primary CLD schools, each co-located with a mainstream primary school.

Option 2 Replace the three existing schools with two newly built 100 place generic primary CLD schools, each co-located with a mainstream primary school.

Option 3 Replace the three existing schools with a single 200 place generic primary CLD school, co-located with a mainstream primary school.

Option 4 Create a single 2 – 19 school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

And at secondary;:

Combine all Wirral's provision for 11 to 19 year old pupils with CLD into a single special school, with 11 to 16 year old pupils accommodated at the Foxfield building, and the 16 to 19 year old pupils at the Meadowside Site.

At a later date to consider a newly built 11 to 16 school co-located alongside a mainstream secondary school, and to create new 16 to 19 provision co-located alongside a local Further Education College.

In addition to these options an emphasis was placed within the presentation of the options on the need and desire to incorporate enhanced medical support, extended school facilities and wrap around care into our developmental planning. These were key features raised with us, particularly by parents, in our initial discussions leading up to the formal consultation.

2.3 These options were presented at public meetings held in all 5 special schools on;

November 3rd – Meadowside School

November 4th - Foxfield School

November 18th – Stanley School

November 19th – Elleray Park School

November 20th – The Lyndale School

These meetings were all recorded and transcripts are available to members.

2.4 Drop-in sessions were held for parents or others not able to make the public meetings or those who wished to discuss their views less publicly on November 12th (secondary) and November 25th (primary).

2.5 Between late November and early December consultation meetings were held with representative groups of pupils from each of the five schools. These meetings were attended by a Child Advocate from WIRED and staff members as necessary to aid communication. Clearly these pupils were not able to respond to the formal consultation paper but their views were sought

regarding what they thought about their current school, what changes could be made to improve it and how they would feel about the developments we were proposing, especially co-location. Questions and responses are available on the CD.

2.6 A meeting was held with primary parent governors on November 13th to discuss the progress of the consultation process.

2.7 A visit was arranged on December 3rd, for parents, governors and head teachers to view Newbridge School in Oldham, a new build secondary special school in Oldham.

2.8 In late December 2008, following a request from the governing body of one of the special schools, it was agreed to extend the limit of the consultation period by one month in order to gain further responses, especially those of parents.

2.9 In January 2009, visits by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were arranged to each of the 5 schools.

2.10 On January 15th 2009 a meeting was held with members of Foxfield and Meadowside School's PTA.

2.11 On February 9th and February 24th meetings were held with the CLD Consultation Group, a representative group of parents, who were in the majority, governors and head teachers in order to consider the broad outcomes of the consultation process, how the original proposals had been modified/adapted and to gain a broad agreement as to how to progress the improvement of special education provision for pupils with complex learning difficulties on the Wirral.

2.12 Also during the consultation process we have been in conversation with and/or have received feedback from a number of other key stakeholders e.g. health, social care, Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and colleagues in the FE sector. All are keen to work with us in our developments and the LSC and Wirral Metropolitan College in particular see great advantages to be gained by co-location of the 16-19 provision, which could provide a learning pathway into FE not only for our CLD pupils but also those placed in mainstream, Clare Mount and West Kirby Residential School. This could reduce our current reliance on independent specialist FE colleges in anticipation of the Local Authority taking over the LSC budget for this.

Response to the Consultation Process

3.1 Attendance at Public Meetings

	Parents	Staff	Governors	Others	Total
Meadowside meeting 03.11.08	16	20	7	3	46
Foxfield meeting 04.11.08	12	13	11	4	40
Stanley meeting 18.11.08					

	14	40	7	2	63
Elleray Park meeting 19.11.08	23	30	2	6	61
The Lyndale meeting 20.11.08	16	23	7	3	49
Total	81	126	32	18	259

NB Some people, parents, staff and governors attended more than one meeting.

20 people attended the drop in sessions, mainly parents but also one or two staff.

3.2 Submission of Written Responses

Individual responses to the consultation have been received from;

- 16 parents of secondary age children
- 7 parents of primary age children
- 16 members of staff
- 3 governors

Collective responses have been received from staff, parent and governor groups from each of the five schools including the Friends of Foxfield School and the Meadowside Parents Action Group.

Responses have been received from the following other stakeholders; Social Care, Children with Disabilities Team, Wirral PCT, Wirral Transport Services, Wirral Metropolitan College, Unison, NAHT and Connexions

Outcomes of the Consultation Process

Analysis of the Public Meeting Records and Individual Responses

N.B. The proposal for the creation of a 2-19 school for children and multiple learning difficulties proposed by the parents, staff and governors at The Lyndale School and supported by them throughout the consultation process, has received little comment or support from other members of the CLD community. This does not mean that the proposal is without merit but members need to be advised that the following analysis and report is based largely on comments received from those associated with the other four schools. Members have available to them on CD the details and rationale of the proposal submitted by The Lyndale School.

4.1 During the course of the consultation process the context, particularly in regard to potential sources of funding for any new developments, has changed. Wirral has been advised of its Primary Building Schools for the Future (BSF) monies over the next 15 years and also has had confirmed its initial allocation of BSF monies for secondary provision. Discussions have progressed regarding accessing LSC funding for the proposed 16-19 provision. Thus far this latter proposal has been received favourably as, if we do progress with co-location with WMC, on a site adjacent to a proposed new Chester University campus then this will greatly enhance the learning

opportunities of all the students involved. These changes have impacted upon the consultation process.

4.2 The outcomes of the consultation process are not amenable to a numerical or statistical analysis. Rather there is a need to look at the themes raised, both positive and critical and how these might be incorporated into modifications of the original proposals. Members will also note that the responses we have received, particularly from parents, are only representative of the views of approximately 25% of the numbers possible. It was with this in mind that we took our initial analysis of the outcomes of the consultation back to our CLD Consultation Group (meetings on February 9th and 24th), which includes a broad representation of parents, governors and staff, prior to compiling this report.

4.3 Beginning with the most important groups of stakeholders – parents and pupils – the general views were as follows;

4.4 The vast majority of parents are extremely satisfied with the education that their children are currently receiving and are concerned that whatever developments do take place do not disrupt their children in the short term and will provide positive benefits in the longer term. They were, however, keen for their children to gain from any potential benefits from investment in ways similar to mainstream school pupils:

Reference to academy schools – “I bet the government will give them X amount of millions of pounds and I hope the same goes for special schools as our children are incredibly vulnerable and trustworthy and we all know the real world is not like this it can be very cruel, so our children need the best that money can provide including, nurses, teachers, speech therapists social workers all the help these children need, as the government cannot ignore our children’s needs. MAKE DO won’t wash anymore”

4.5 In the secondary sector there was little, if any, support for an early merger of Foxfield and Meadowside Schools in the manner proposed. Whilst the benefits of a single 11-19, new build, split site school could be seen, there was considerable concern expressed regarding the disruption that pupils would experience during the transition process. Their view was that if this was the direction in which we would move then we should build the new provision first and then plan for the pupils to move in. The drivers for this proposal, particularly the need to provide enhanced provision to deliver the 14-19 curriculum and the schedule of BSF monies originally not being available until 2015 have been ameliorated by a change in central government policy allowing us to receive BSF monies earlier.

4.6 Parents also expressed the view that there would be a reduction in choice if we were to move to a single 11-19 school. They feel that currently each school has its own particular ethos and caters for different pupils needs. There was a concern that this may be lost in a single school option but benefits could be seen by the new the new build being purpose built to cater for the full range of needs.

4.7 Parents also expressed concern regarding the perceived inadequacies of 19-25 provision for their children and queried why this was not part of the consultation process. Whilst this is currently outside of our remit we are working closely with both Wirral Metropolitan College and the Learning and Skills Council, who provide/fund such provision in order to address this issue. Indeed this has been one of the major reasons behind the proposal to co-locate the proposed 16-19 provision with the college. In September 2010 the LSC budget for FE provision will transfer to Wirral Council and this will facilitate joint planning even further.

4.8 Parents were also keen that whatever proposals were decided upon would incorporate the wide range of additional and extended services that we envisage.

4.9 The views of pupils were quite mixed. Again they all enjoyed going to school particularly as they felt safe and supported but felt that the facilities on offer could be improved. Some pupils could see benefits in extended school activities others would prefer to go home and be with their families. Understandably some pupils felt concerned regarding any major changes, especially co-location, others were positive about the idea. Again there were mixed views about the proposal for a 16-19 6th form. Pupils were unanimous that any changes should await the new builds being available.

4.10 In the primary sector parents were again very supportive of the education their children receive at their current schools and, therefore, anxious that any changes will build upon and improve current provision. Of the options presented there was little support for the single school of 200 pupils and a tendency to opt for a rebuild of all three schools. There was, however, a recognition of the practical and financial constraints of this option and a move towards favouring the option of building two new CLD schools, each accommodating approximately 100 children was observed during the consultation process.

4.11 Parents were very supportive of the inclusion within the planning and development process of the provision of extended and additional services and, in particular, the co-location on one of the school sites of a new purpose built Child Development Centre. This option, which has been discussed at the highest level within Wirral PCT was brought to the meetings by a senior member of the PCT, who attended two of the three of the primary consultation meetings. This option is being pursued with the PCT.

4.12 The view has been raised, by some parents, that the proposals may lead to a potential reduction in choice of schools. Also the issue of co-location has raised some concern. This latter concern was partly due to a misunderstanding of the purpose of co-location i.e. that it would mean all children being integrated into the mainstream school, partly due to worries that if facilities were shared then the children with CLD may not have their needs fully met and partly due a concern that co-location would lead to a level of 'busyness' and potential noise which would not be in the children's interests. Should members agree to progress with the recommendations then these issues will be addressed in the next phase of the planning process.

4.13 The vast majority of primary aged children consulted stated that they enjoyed coming to school. Similarly to the secondary aged children some children liked the idea of extended school activities before and after school, others would prefer to be at home with their families. Most pupils were in favour of co-location and the majority who expressed a view felt that the schools should include all pupils and transferring to a big school at secondary age would be a good idea.

4.14 Individual responses from staff at the five schools divided into concerns regarding the provision being proposed for the pupils and, quite understandably, how the proposals may impact upon them as employees.

4.15 In answer to the latter of these two points it is important to note that no reduction in the overall number of places for children and young people is being proposed, indeed there may be an increase post 16. Whilst there may be some efficiency savings by a reduction in the number of schools we will still require a similar number of staff to teach, support and care for the pupils. Staff had particular concerns regarding the need, under some of the proposals, for some schools to close and for new ones to open. Staff, have been issued with a resume of Wirral's policies and procedures, which apply in such circumstances, and an initial meeting has been held with their Union Representatives. We will continue to work closely with all staff and their representatives in implementing any future proposals or recommendations.

4.16 In considering the proposals from a professional standpoint staff largely represent the view of a governor expressed at one of the public meetings ;

“that these are very good schools, operating in very inadequate buildings and it's the skills of the staff of those schools that have made them appear adequate”.

Staff recognise the limitations of the buildings within which they work and the limitations this can place upon the educational opportunities they are able to provide for their pupils. They are broadly supportive of the proposed changes and the improvements it may offer – enhanced facilities for curriculum delivery, opportunities for greater inclusion, opportunities for enhanced service provision – and feel that the change process should be led by the needs of the children and should involve the whole CLD community. As a consequence of being needs led staff are not supportive of changes, which may lead to disruption and/or unnecessary stress for the pupils.

4.17 Of the three governors who made individual responses one made comments regarding the need to plan carefully as to how we meet the wide range of pupil need envisaged within generic CLD schools, the need to improve 16-19 vocational opportunities and the need for careful planning regarding 16-19 provision. The other two made detailed comments regarding the range of provision we may consider and/or details regarding the next stage of the planning process. These responses, which are not easily summarised, have been incorporated into the consultation process and are available to members.

Analysis of Collective Responses

5.1 These responses were received approximately one month later than the above following the agreement to extend the consultation period to allow further discussion between parents, staff and governors. This obviously allowed all those involved to consider the issues involved in greater depth. It also allowed for a degree of consensus to emerge.

5.2 At primary level it was agreed that the preferred option was for the build of two new and purpose built, generic primary CLD schools, each co-located and each meeting the full range of need within the CLD sector.

5.3 At secondary level it was agreed that the preferred option was to build a new 11-19 secondary CLD school but with split sites, 11-16 and 16-19, each catering for the full range of need within the CLD sector. The 11-16 site would be co-located with a mainstream secondary school and the 16-19 site co-located with a local FE College.

5.4 There were a number of caveats associated with these agreements, e.g. that the design and build of the proposed new schools should fully take into account the range of needs of the pupils for which they are to provide, that the environment within which they are set is appropriate to these needs, that the potential benefits of co-location are fully realised and the potential disadvantages minimised and that other partners (especially health and social care) are fully involved so as to provide the range of provision needed by the pupils and their families. All of these comments will be incorporated into the design and construction phase if these projects are approved. Also some concerns were expressed regarding the co-location of all the proposed new build provision and whether consideration should be given to some being co-located and some not.

5.5 Some concerns have been raised by a group of parents at Meadowside School regarding the appropriateness of a potential site identified for the co-location of the 16-19 provision. These concerns relate largely to health and safety issues and we have offered to meet with these parents to assure them that no decisions will be made, which compromise the health and safety of the pupils concerned.

5.6 The responses from other stakeholders are both supportive and favourable. All are in favour of our providing the best possible facilities and resources for Wirral's pupils with CLD, and the concept of 21st Century School was raised specifically by the NAHT. Social Care are particular keen, along with health to work jointly to provide co-located services, which meet the aspirations of The Aiming Higher agenda. The Learning and Skills Council and Wirral Metropolitan College are particularly interested in our proposals for co-locating our 16-19 provision with a local FE College as they have identified significant benefits this would have in smoothing the developmental pathway for our children and young people from childhood to adulthood.

5.7 Regarding the proposed 16-19 provision, co-located with a local FE College, a potential site has been identified alongside the proposed new rebuild of Wirral Metropolitan College and adjacent to a proposed new

campus for Chester University. If this site were to be deemed suitable and funding was secured this would provide a unique opportunity for young people with CLD and others with disabilities to become an integral part of a thriving learning community. We are currently investigating the appropriateness of this site with colleagues from Technical Services.

Agreeing a Way Forward

6.1 In order to seek a way forward, which would find a broad agreement amongst our stakeholders, a workshop was organised with our CLD Consultation Group at which we presented feedback from the consultation process thus far and also information regarding potential sources of funding for the projects proposed. Participants were then able to discuss and advise upon a range of proposals, which had emerged from the consultation process. These included those noted in 5 above, variations on the concept of co-location, the establishment of a 2-19 school for PMLD and ways in which this might be included within other proposals.

6.2 This workshop extended over two sessions and resulted in an agreement to pursue the;

“Creation of a generic 11-19 CLD secondary school, with the 11-16 provision co-located with a mainstream secondary school and the split site 6th form, co-located with an FE College, with each having the facilities and resources to meet the full range of needs experienced by pupils with complex learning difficulties”.

This school, on separate sites, would be under single management and governance.

“Creation of two, generic CLD primary schools, each co-located with a mainstream primary school, with both schools having the facilities and resources to meet the full range of need experienced by pupils with complex learning difficulties”.

A rider was added whereby, where appropriate, pupils attending these schools would be offered the opportunity to integrate into their own local school.

6.2 No decision was reached as to whether we should progress with the development of a 2-19 school for children with pmlD as it was felt further investigation was required as to the demand for such a school, which pupils it would provide for, and its potential viability. The numbers proposed for such a provision i.e. 45 or approximately 7/8 per key stage does not significantly impact upon the other proposals being made.

The SEN Improvement Test

7.1 From the outcomes of the consultation process we have achieved a mandate for developments, which should improve the provision we make for

children and young people who experience complex learning difficulties. In order to demonstrate this improvement the government requires that we 'test' our proposals against the following criteria;

improved access to education and associated services including the curriculum, wider school activities, facilities and equipment, with reference to the LA's Accessibility Strategy

improved access to specialist staff, both education and other professionals, including any external support and/or outreach services

improved access to suitable accommodation

improved supply of suitable places

7.2 The proposals being put forward would meet these criteria as follows;

Building new schools, following the guidelines contained within DCSF Building Bulletin 102 – "Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs", which from the start will consider the full range of needs of the children for whom they are providing and also the range of teaching resources, environments and technologies which will enable maximum curriculum access and progression.

The new build schools will allow access to all children with CLD, irrespective of their additional and individual needs and provide a completely inclusive environment both internally and externally. Co-location will provide opportunities for social and academic integration and inclusion as appropriate for each of the children and young people. In particular, at the 14-19 level this will allow a much smoother transition for our young people from childhood to adulthood through a process of person centred planning and "Learning for Life".

Building Bulletin 102 not only concerns itself with the educational provision and the broader learning environment but also with the need to incorporate the accommodation needs of the various resident and visiting professional staff e.g. doctors, physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists, psychologists, members of social care, who are crucial to meeting the full range of pupil need in an holistic way.

By working closely with partners in health, social care and extended schools we will further be able to bring the full range of additional services to the children and young people. These could include; provision of a co-located Child Development Centre, provision of short break and/or independence training facilities, extended services both during term time and school holidays.

The accommodation provided would not only meet the full range of identified pupil need but also provide a valuable community resource especially for children and adults with disabilities.

Whilst we are proposing to reduce the overall number of special schools for pupils with CLD from five to three all will be accessible to all pupils and will be designed to meet all their needs. Currently this is not the case and this can impact upon the availability of places and parental choice. The actual capacity of each of the provisions will be based upon a detailed examination of current and historical rates of incidence of CLD and predictions for the future in order to provide a sufficient number of places to meet need.

Next Steps

8.1 If Cabinet gives approval to the recommendations of this report then the following actions will be necessary.

8.2 Potential sites will need to be identified for the two new build primary CLD schools, both co-located, plans drawn up, submitted and approved. As part of this process discussions will need to continue with the PCT regarding the co-location of a new Child Development Centre and also with Children's Social Care staff regarding potential provision of facilities for short breaks. Again plans will need to be drawn up, submitted and approved.

8.3 A potential site will need to be identified for the new build 11-16 CLD site, plans drawn up submitted and approved. Discussion will need to continue with Children's Social Care Staff regarding provision for short breaks. Again plans will need to be drawn up, submitted and approved.

8.4 The potential site, already identified, for the proposed new 16-19 provision will need to be further investigated and plans drawn up, submitted and approved. Discussions will need to continue with Children's/Adult Social Care regarding potential provision for short breaks and independence training. Discussions will need to continue with LSC and WMC regarding potential funding and achieving a working relationship which is both beneficial to 16-19 students and 19-25 students.

8.5 Further investigations are still required regarding the proposed provision of co-located 2-19 provision specifically for pupils with pmlD.

Financial Implications

9.1 Funding for the primary CLD schools is available through both the primary BSF funding stream and the primary capital budget.

9.2 Funding for the secondary 11-16 CLD school is available through the secondary BSF funding stream.

9.3 Funding for the 16-19 CLD 6th form provision will be subject to application to and approval from the LSC.

Staffing Implications

10.1 It is not anticipated that there will be any reduction in the number of pupil places offered under these proposals, indeed at the 16-19 provision they may

increase in order to provide a stepping stone for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not currently within the CLD cohort. However, with the overall reduction in the numbers of special educational schools for children and young people with CLD there may be reductions in staffing numbers in some areas. These will be identified in the next phase.

Equal Opportunities Implications

11.1 If the changes proposed are accepted the vast majority of pupils with CLD will be able to access and have their needs met in all of the new facilities. This should lead to a reduction in the number of pupils who need to be placed in special schools or colleges outside of Wirral.

Community Safety Implications

12.1 There are none arising from this report

Local Agenda 21 Implications

13.1 There are none arising from this report.

Planning implications

14.1 Any proposed new builds would be subject to full planning application and approval.

Anti-poverty Implications

15.1 Pupils who are receipt of free school meals are over represented within the CLD population. Provision of additional services may provide needed assistance to both the pupils and their families.

Social Inclusion Implications

16.1 Currently, of the five CLD schools only Stanley School is co-located. Whilst all of the other four have developed integration programmes these are all hampered by logistical problems. Co-location of all our CLD sites will vastly enhance the opportunities for our children and young people with CLD to become fully included within the Wirral community and meet our commitment to the inclusion agenda.

Local Member Support Implications

17.1 Children and young people within our CLD schools come from all wards of the borough.

Background Papers

18.1 These include;

Previous reports to Cabinet on September 25th 2008
The following are all on the CD distributed to members.
Copies of consultation documents
Transcripts of public meetings
Copies of consultation returns
Copies of papers taken to the CLD Consultation Group in February 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

(1) Approval is given in principal to either:

(a) the replacement of the current three primary CLD schools by the development of two, new build, primary (2-11) CLD schools, each co-located with a mainstream primary school and each providing for approximately 100 children and catering for the full range of need found within the CLD population, or;

(b) the replacement of Stanley and Elleray Park schools by the development of two new build, primary (2-11) CLD schools, each co-located with a mainstream primary school and each providing for approximately 100 children and catering for the full range of need found within the CLD population and,

to continue investigations and consultations regarding the development of a 2-19 CLD provision specifically for children who experience profound and multiple learning difficulties and who, by reasons of medical/physical difficulties, may be considered particularly vulnerable. Under this proposal The Lyndale School will continue as presently until these investigations and consultations are completed and further reports to Cabinet are considered.

(2) Approval is given to the development of new build, secondary (11-19), CLD school, catering for the full range of needs found within the CLD population, on split sites.

The 11-16 provision, approximately 135 places, would be co-located with a mainstream secondary school.

The 16-19 premises, approximately 120 places to allow for additional provision to cater for those pupils currently educated within mainstream or other special schools e.g. Clare Mount or West Kirby Residential School and who may require a stepping stone to Further/Higher Education would be co-located with a local FE College (WMC).

(3) Approval is given to continuing consultations with other stakeholders regarding funding of the above and the provision of additional extended services.

Appendix

Summary of the major points made during the consultation process.

Pupil Consultation – Primary

Primary pupils expressed the following opinions;

- The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school, being with their friends, being able to go swimming and do their work;
- They liked the idea of being able to additional activities outside and expressed preferences for playing with toys and dolls and other games;
- They liked the opportunity for before and after school clubs and also the choice to be at home;
- There were mixed views on the idea of going to bigger schools but agreements on the need for quiet areas;
- If schools were to be bigger children would like bigger classrooms, more room to play and a “massive garden”;
- On 11+ transfer views were mixed;
- Pupils appeared to feel that the idea of generic CLD schools is generally a good one.

Pupil Consultation – Secondary

At secondary level pupils expressed the following opinions;

- All pupils enjoy coming to school and the best things about it are friends, the swimming pool, art and the fact there are no bullies and everybody helps you;
- A whole range of preferred additional activities were mentioned with some pupils wishing to take these up outside normal school hours and some not;
- Pupils expressed a range of concerns regarding possible changes e.g. co-location, amalgamation of schools (especially as an interim measure) and possible reduction in choice. Pupils would like for the new school to be built moving;
- Pupils were positive about the idea of a separate 6th but differed about where it should be located i.e. next to a school or next to a college. They did agree that it should be different to a school;
- Pupils also agreed that any new school would need more space, bigger classrooms and “a roof that doesn’t leak”.

Comments made at drop in sessions

Secondary

- Need to continue with small class sizes;
- Should avoid the disruption that would come from the interim proposal and move into new build;
- Need a clearer picture on what's on offer and the funding to pay for it;
- Concern re: implications for staff employment, need for continuity of staff;
- Concern re: potential of some children being in the same school for 17 years (2-19 proposal);
- Concern re: potential reduction in choice;
- Things can't stay the same – we need change for the better;
- Understand the idea of college opportunities and see the benefits – the idea of a 6th form at 12 Quays is a good one;
- Need to expand what's on offer at Conway Park;
- Positive re: inclusion opportunities available through co-location, though it needs to be managed carefully;
- Positive about possibilities of extended services.

Primary

- Very positive re: the benefits of co-location – “a wonderful idea”;
- Would class sizes be maintained?
- Need to keep the current ethos and culture;
- Need to improve respite and extended services.

Group Responses – including parents, governors and staff

- Things work well at the moment but the limitations of the current buildings are recognised;
- Three new schools would be ideal but recognize that this would be unfeasible, therefore, two new schools would be the preferred option;

- Transition is an important part of children's lives. If we have 2-19 for pmlD then why not for ASD etc;
- There appears to be no educational reason why current secondary provision is not appropriate for pupils with pmlD;
- Any new build schools would have to maintain the opportunities for inclusive partnerships with mainstream schools.

Individual Responses

Secondary – Parents

- Concern regarding the original proposals of amalgamation of Foxfield and Meadowside Schools prior to any new build and the disruptive effect this would have upon the children;
- Need for a continuation of the independent living provision;
- Need to ensure that any changes bring about improvement;
- New build is a good idea but leave the schools as they are until then;
- Class sizes and provision should continue;
- Provision for post 19 is more important;
- A single school will remove choice;
- Some concern re: co-location – possible ridicule and bullying;
- Concern re: pmlD provision at secondary level;
- “I bet the government will give them (Academy Schools) X amount of millions of pounds and I hope the same goes for special schools as our children are incredibly vulnerable and trustworthy and we all know the real world is not like this it can be very cruel, so our children need the best that money can provide including, nurses, teachers, speech therapists social workers all the help these children need, as the government cannot ignore our children's needs. MAKE DO won't wash anymore”;
- Need for a more holistic planning approach for 2½ - 19, which involves parents as part of the process and in the depth and the detail.

Staff

- Prospect of new built premises exciting, early merger not so;
- Need for the 16-19 provision to be a school and staffed and managed accordingly.

Primary - Parents

- Object to an early merger of Foxfield and Meadowside – new build makes more sense;
- The reason the CLD schools work so well is that they are small and family oriented. I am not convinced that CLD children should be included into mainstream school. Creating a school for 2-19 year olds is most inappropriate;
- I would agree with Option2 – creation of 2 generic primary CLD schools both co-located;
- Any decisions must be governed by the needs of the children and not based upon cost;
- Am fully supporting Lyndale school becoming 2-19.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET –23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PROPOSED CENTRE FOR WALLASEY YOUTH PROJECT AT THE FIRE STATION, MILL LANE, WALLASEY – SCHEME & ESTIMATE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the proposal to accommodate a Youth Club within the ground floor of the Wallasey Fire Station and re-locate Fire & Rescue facilities from the ground floor into under-used accommodation on the first floor. The report requests Members' approval of the scheme and estimate, together with authorisation to complete the design and obtain tenders.

1. Background

At the Cabinet meeting on 06 November 2008 proposed 2009/10 budget savings from the Children and Young People's Department were presented. A request was made by Cabinet for a follow-up report detailing a proposed reconfiguration setting out the impact of these changes on the operation of the Youth Service.

- 1.1 A report proposing the consolidation of Youth Service provision into four districts, each with a major centre and smaller satellites, was approved by Cabinet on 27 November 2008 (minute 283 refers). That report sought permission to engage with the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service to consider a centre to be created at Wallasey Fire Station using Youth Capital Plus funding. Members were informed that the proposals over the four districts would result in a reduction in the youth service budget of £150,000 out of a total budget of £2,650,900.
- 1.2 The vision for Wirral is to have four large, modern facilities which offer young people a broad menu, providing support, information and access to developmental opportunities. Wallasey Fire Station has been chosen as the preferred location for one of the four main centres.
- 1.3 Since that Cabinet meeting consultation has been held with young people regarding the programme of activities to be offered at each of the main centres, and several meetings have been held with representatives of the Fire & Rescue Service.
- 1.4 An expression of interest in 'My Place' was submitted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue in respect of Wallasey Fire Station. Although the fire station submission was not successful, its location near to a number of anti-social behaviour hot spots and the absence of youth provision in the area meant that it could be considered for development under Youth Capital Plus.
- 1.5 The proposal has a number of linkages to the national Aiming High Strategy. The involvement of a range of partners will ensure that young people are being offered a broad menu. In addition the proposal is based on provision being attractive and

available at week-ends. The Fire and Rescue brand is universally recognised and is associated with high quality service provision.

- 1.6 The fire station is in a good location for young people and is close to public transport links. As a working fire station, fire and rescue officers will be on site 24 hrs which provides an added sense of security.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 Wallasey Fire Station was purpose-built in 1974 by Wallasey Corporation as a headquarters for the Fire Brigade. As such, it has accommodation which is now underused as an area fire station. Upon Local Government Re-organisation later that year it transferred to what is now known as the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. The building comprises 3 floors of accommodation and is of steel-framed construction with concrete floors and brick-faced cavity wall construction. The building has generally been well maintained, and is in a good state of repair. Vehicular access is good, and existing parking provision is adequate.
- 2.2 The site includes a Healthy-Living Centre which is used by people who are recovering from heart related illness. This facility is in a detached building at the rear of the Fire Station has recently been developed in conjunction with the PCT.
- 2.3 It is proposed that accommodation is made available to the Wirral CYPD Youth Service on a 10 year lease at a pepper corn rent. The heating, electrical supply and landlord maintenance costs of the external fabric of the building will be met by the Fire Authority and included in the lease arrangements. Delegated authority to proceed with a lease on these terms is being sought separately from the Cabinet portfolio holder by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management.
- 2.4 The proposal involves the Fire & Rescue Service vacating approx. 400 sq.m. of accommodation, principally comprising 3 large dormitories, a large locker room, toilet facilities, laundry, drying room, fitness room, and 2 offices. In addition, approx. 100 sq.m. of detached garage space is to be vacated.
- 2.5 By way of redress, the proposals include the development of nine single study/ rest rooms for the Fire & Rescue Service on the first floor, together with three single WC/ shower compartments. Each study/ rest room shall contain five lockers, a bed, desk and chair, all supplied separately from these proposals by the Fire & Rescue Service. Recreational facilities shall be re-located in the existing meeting room at first floor level, and the laundry and drying facilities shall be re-located in the existing auxilliary control room at ground floor level.
- 2.6 The proposed Youth Project accommodation shall cater for up to 80 service users per session, and shall include:
- A dance studio / performance space,
 - A fitness and games room,
 - 2 general purpose Activity Rooms, including Art facilities,
 - An I.T. Training Suite,
 - A sound-proof Music Room,
 - A Training Kitchen / Snack and Juice Bar,
 - An open and welcoming Lounge / Reception area,
 - A Chill-out Room,
 - 2 Offices, including Reception facilities,

- Locker Room and Toilets,
- A large Outdoor Equipment Store / Drying Area, and
- Dry Equipment Store.

- 2.7 The proposed Youth Project accommodation shall be physically segregated from the operational Fire Station, and shall be provided with its own independent entrance, with canopy, and emergency exit points. New windows shall be installed in the former shower and locker room areas to introduce additional natural lighting.
- 2.8 The existing accommodation does not comply with current DDA requirements for accessibility. The proposals include widening doorways and increasing corridor widths, as well as providing ramps to each external door. A wheelchair-accessible WC is also proposed.
- 2.9 The Youth Project accommodation and new study/ rest rooms for the Fire & Rescue Service shall require re-wiring, including IT data installation, to meet the Council's specification, and generally the heating installations in the areas to be developed shall require a full re-fit. The Youth Project accommodation shall be provided with its own fire and intruder alarm installations.
- 2.10 It is suggested that the remodelling of the Fire Station to accommodate the Youth Project be carried out over a 16 week contract period. The initial works would, by necessity, be the relocation of the Fire & Rescue Service accommodation, followed by the development of the Youth Project accommodation. It is anticipated that the works shall be completed by November 2009.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 All Professional Services for the scheme are being provided by staff within the Technical Services Department with costs met from the grant from Youth Capital Plus allocation.
- 3.2 The estimated costs for the works are;

Building Works to relocate Fire & Rescue Service facilities	£ 97,400.00
Building Works to accommodate Youth Project within Fire Station main building	£227,000.00
Building Works to detached garage block + external works relating to Youth Project	£ 19,000.00
Contingencies	£ 30,000.00
Total estimated building costs	<u>£373,400.00</u>

Departmental Charges including: - Professional Fees Clerk Of Works Salary CDM Coordinator Building Regulation Fees Planning Fees	£ 56,010.00
Total building costs including fees	<u>£ 429,410.00</u>

Furniture & Equipment for Youth Project	£ 22,600
OVERALL ANTICIPATED SET-UP COSTS OF PROJECT	<u>£452,000.00</u>

3.3 A Project plan has been prepared and submitted to the National Youth Taskforce Team at the Department of Children Schools and Families. Funding under the Youth Capital Plus scheme would ordinarily have been available only up to April 2009, however, staff from the Youth Task Force have indicated that if the money is committed and the project plan indicates a completion date for next year the money can be carried forward.

3.4 The scheme is being funded by a Youth Capital Plus grant from the Department of Children, Schools and Families of £452,000. As reported in 2.3 the revenue costs for heating, lighting and external maintenance will be met by the Fire Authority.

4. Staffing implications

4.1 The staffing implications across the service were outlined in the report to Cabinet on 27 November 2008 (minute 283 refers).

4.2 Wallasey Fire Station Youth Project would be staffed by a full time worker and there would be an increase in part time hours to ensure the six night provision. The additional staffing required to enable six night provision in the reconfigured service will be identified by de-commissioning provision at other youth centres and redeploying staff to the commissioned centres.

5. Equal opportunities implications

5.1 Access will be provided for both service users and providers with disabilities to all areas of the Wallasey Fire Station Youth Project.

5.2 Ramped access is currently available to the ground floor of the operational Fire Station, and this shall be retained.

5.3 Whereas there is a lift to the upper floors of the Fire & Rescue Service accommodation, access to the upper floors shall generally be restricted to ambulant persons.

5.4 There are no implications in this report for equal opportunities in relation to women, ethnic minorities, or the elderly.

6. Community safety implications

6.1 The proposals allow for a co-ordinated response to community safety and enables the service to engage with the Youth Crime Action Plan.

6.2 The design of this project will take into account best practice to reduce the risk of crime and the local Crime Reduction Officer will be consulted.

7. Local Agenda 21 implications

7.1 These proposals will encourage the positive engagement of young people.

7.2 Low energy electrical fittings, heating controls and water saving devices will all be used as far as possible to help reduce the consumption of natural resources.

7.3 All timber used will be from sustainable sources as by regulated by the FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) or equivalent.

7.4 A "Site Waste Management Plan" will be incorporated in line with recent statutory requirements.

8. Planning implications

8.1 Planning permission and building regulations approval will be required for the scheme and will be submitted by the Technical Services Department, upon Members' agreement, in due course.

8.2 The current Building Regulations (Part L2B), which came into effect on 06 April 2006, require that, when carrying out an extension or major works to building services on an existing building with a total useful floor area of over 1000 sq.m., 'consequential improvements' to the energy performance of the overall building shall be required where it is technically, functionally and economically feasible. The value of these consequential improvements shall generally be deemed under Requirement 17D to be not less than 10% of the value of the principal works. New double-glazed windows and new boilers installed in recent years may be attributed to this area.

9. Anti-poverty implications

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10. Social inclusion implications

10.1 The Youth Service seeks to address social exclusion and promote inclusion.

10.2 The scheme will provide full accessibility for service users in a safe and inclusive environment.

11. Local Member Support implications

11.1 Wallasey Fire Station is in the Liscard Ward, but the proposals may be of interest to Members from all adjacent wards.

12. Background papers

12.1 The information used in preparation of this report is contained within CYPD's bidding documents; the Architect's file C18545 and the Quantity Surveyor's working papers.

12.2 Aiming High – Youth Outreach A Ten Year Strategy For Young People.
Youth Outreach Scrutiny Review – Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

13. Recommendations

That

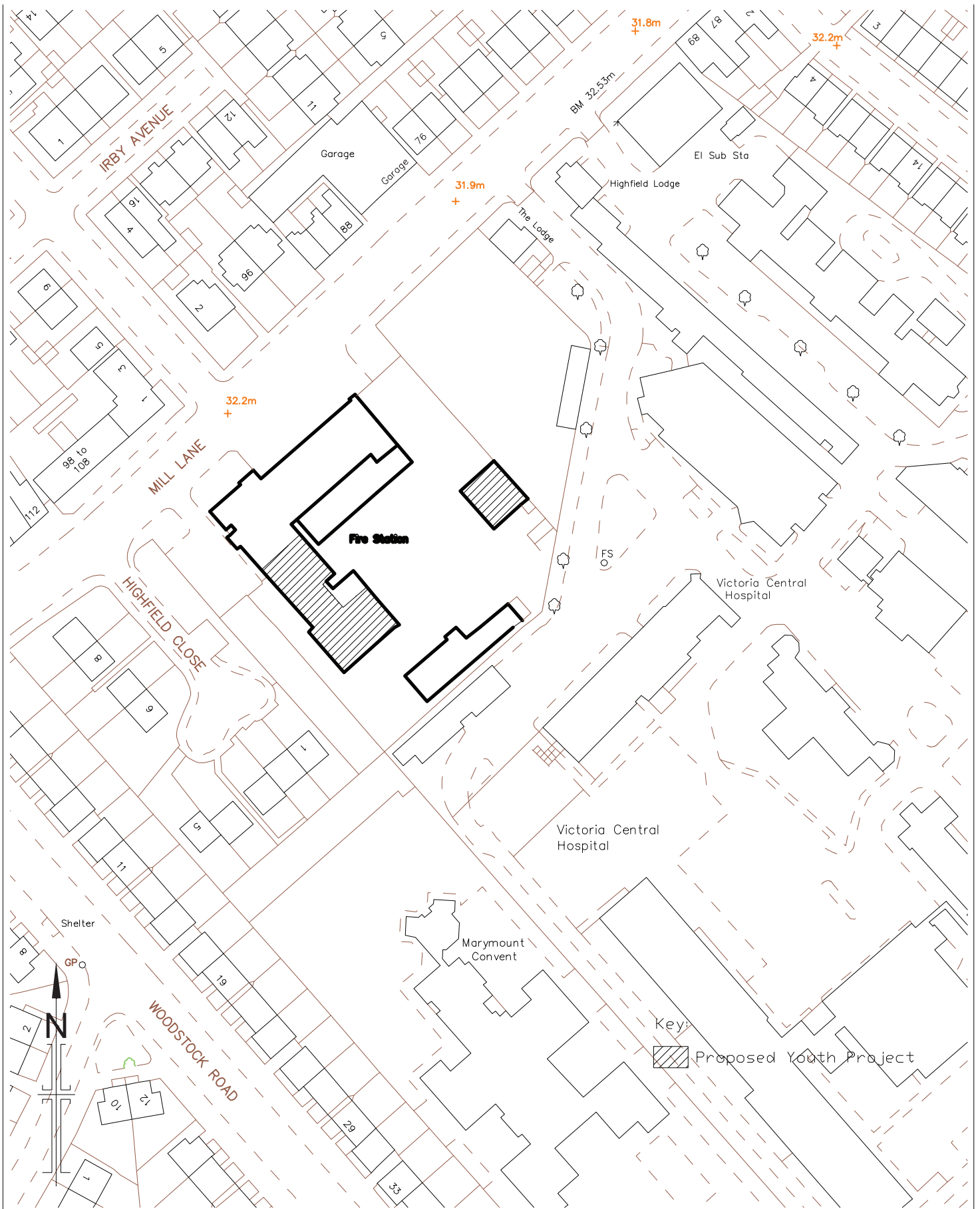
(1) The scheme and estimate contained within this report be approved,

(2) Technical Services be authorised to obtain all necessary statutory approvals for the proposed works,

(3) The Director of Technical Services be authorised to seek tenders for the proposed works, in accordance with the Council's procurement rules, and,

(4) The Director of Children's Services use his delegated powers to accept the lowest bona fide tender, and report back to members in due course.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services



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WRITTEN DIMENSIONS TO BE PREFERRED TO SCALED.

WIRRAL

TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

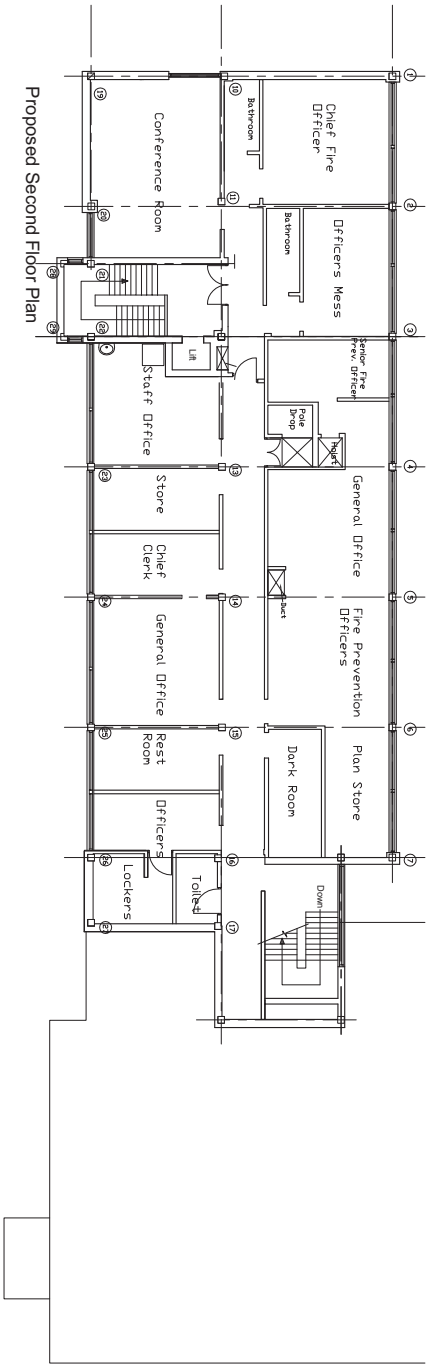
Cheshire Lines Building,
Canning Street,
Birkenhead,
Wirral. CH41 1ND.
Tel. 0151 - 606 2000
Fax. 0151 - 606 2188
e-Mail: technicalservices@wirral.gov.uk



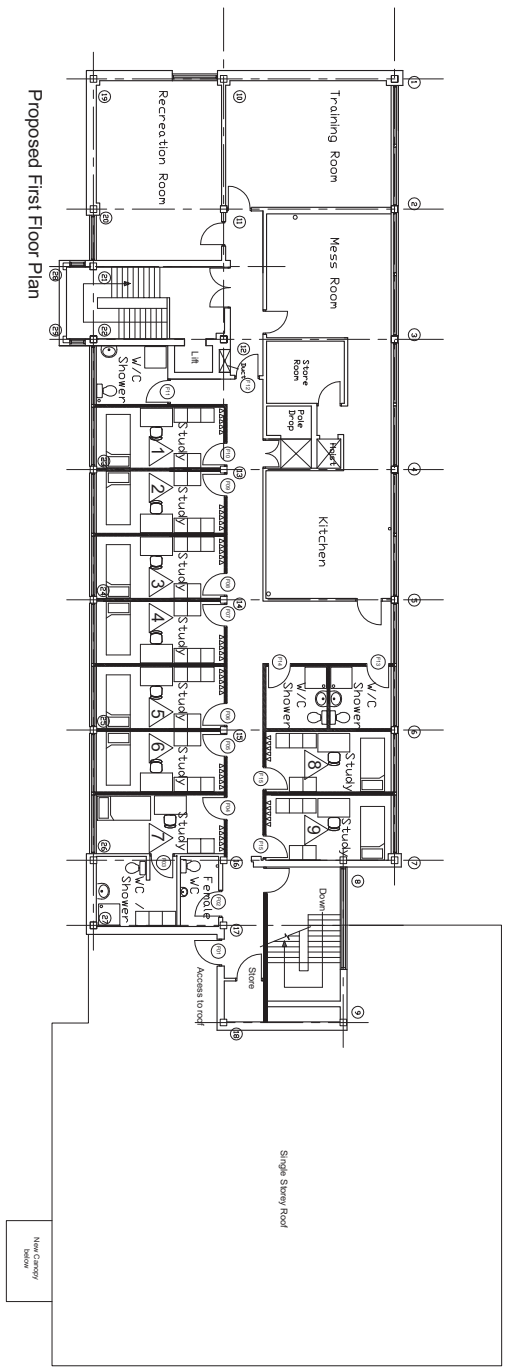
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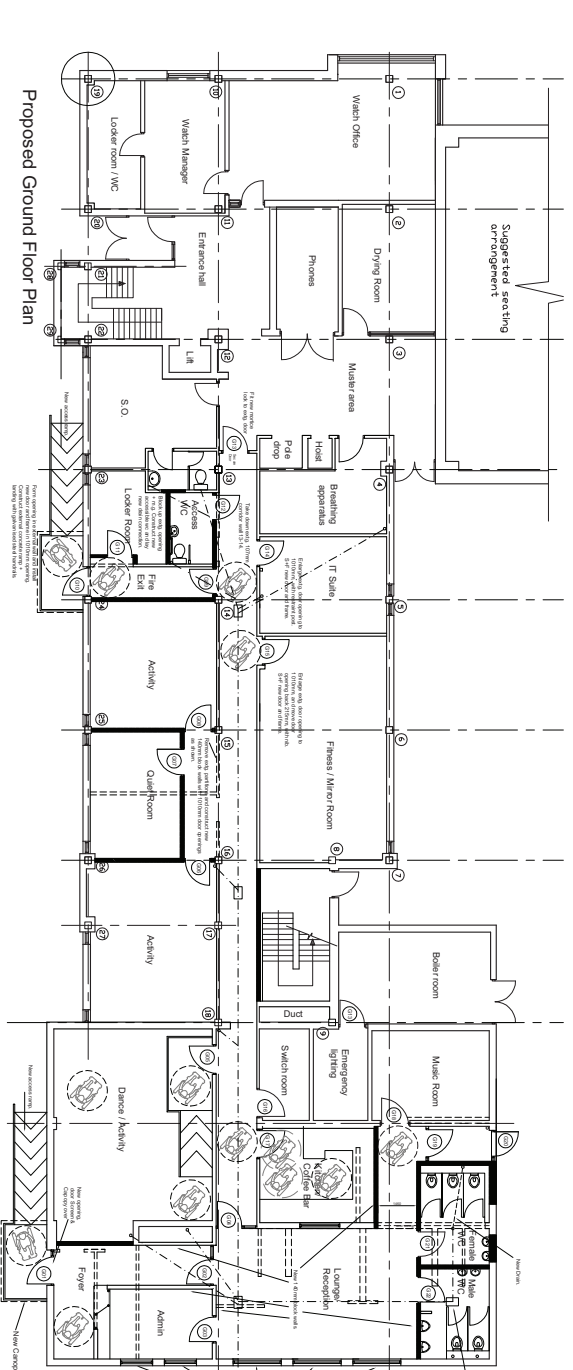
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Proposed Second Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

1
 9 Study Rest Rooms 10m2
 4 Shower/ Wc's Rooms 6m2

- New 140mm Blockwork
- - - Existing drainage
- - - - - New drainage
- ===== Walls to be removed

PROJECT	WALLASEY YOUTH PROJECT Fire Station, Mill Lane Wallasey, CH44 5UE.
CLIENT	WALLASEY FIRE STATION
DATE	11.03.09
REV	A 04.09.09 B 11.03.09
BY	NEW ADDS
CHECKED	NEW ADDS
SCALE	1:100
DATE	FEB 09
PROJECT NO.	C18545/F-1
SCALE	1:100
DATE	FEB 09
PROJECT	WALLASEY YOUTH PROJECT
CLIENT	WALLASEY FIRE STATION
DATE	11.03.09
REV	A 04.09.09 B 11.03.09
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DATE	FEB 09

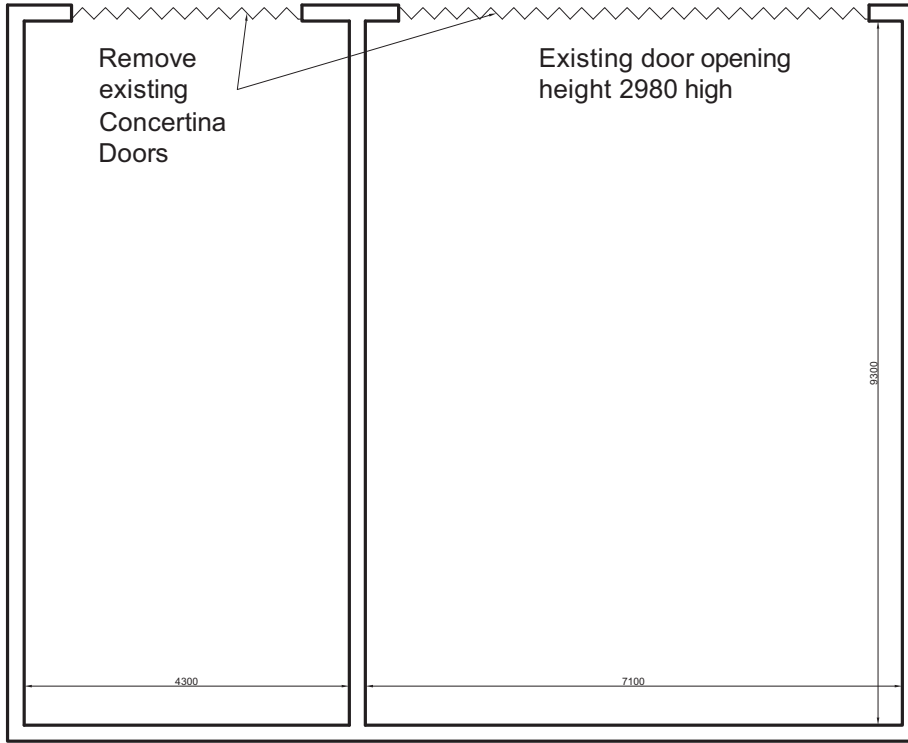
PROPOSED FEASIBILITY PLANS.

WIRRAL
 TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
 CHANGING STATION
 WALLASEY, CH44 5UE
 TEL: 0151 466 4200
 FAX: 0151 466 4200
 EMAIL: WIRRAL@WIRRALFIRE.GOV.UK

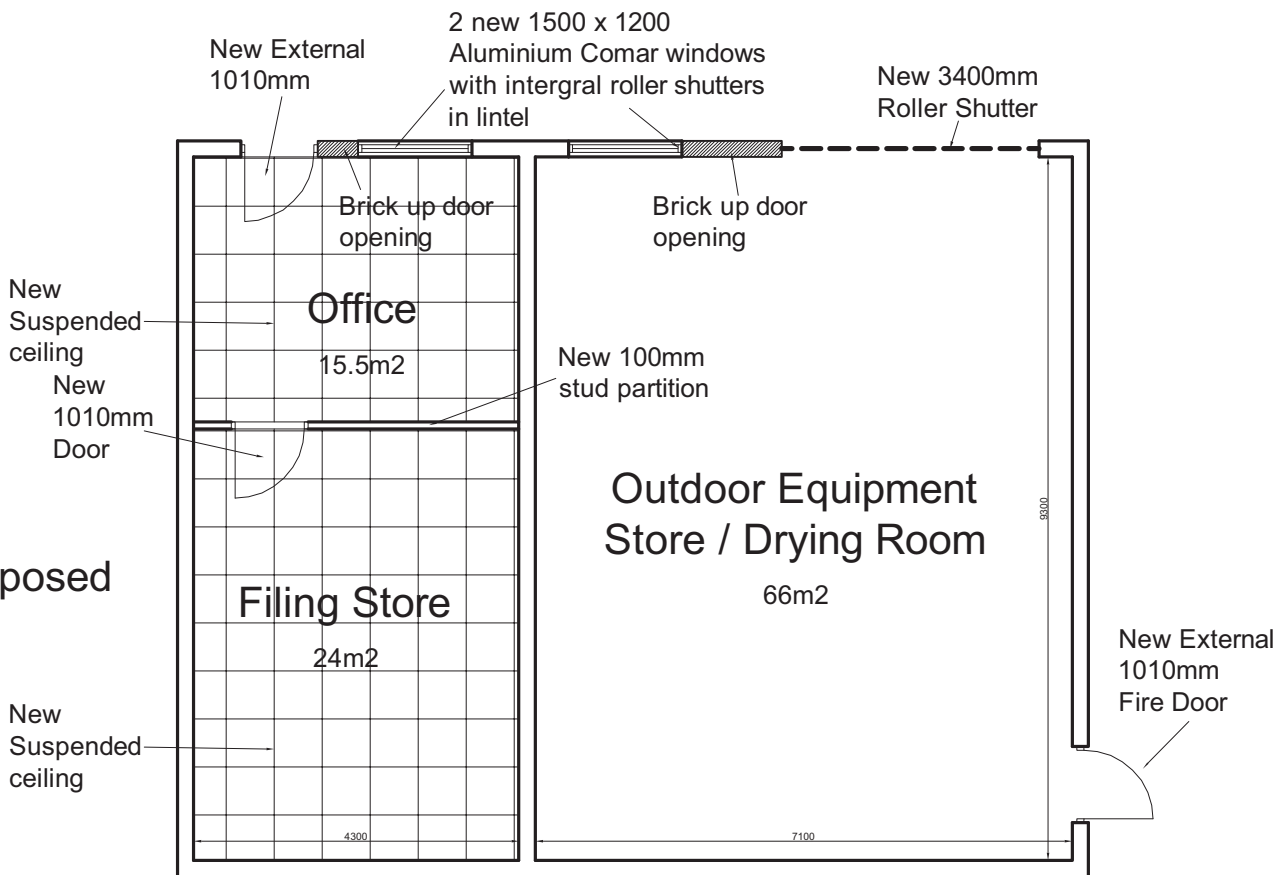
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Existing

Area 108m²



Proposed



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Cheshire Lines Building,
Canning Street,
Birkenhead,
Wirral. CH41 1ND.
Tel. 0151 - 606 2000
Fax. 0151 - 606 2188
e-Mail: technicalservices@wirral.gov.uk



PROJECT Wallasey Youth Project, Fire Station, Mill Lane, Wallasey							
DRAWING TITLE Existing and Proposed Garage Plan							
DRAWN IKS	REVIEWED	AUTHORISED	REV	INITIALS	REVIEWED	DATE	DRAWING NO. C185445/G1
SCALE 1:100						REV.	
DATE 12 March 09						UPRN	

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PLAYBUILDER PROGRAMME REPORT

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the recently awarded Government Playbuilder funding, and to seek approval for the allocation of funding in accordance with the project plan.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Play Pathfinder and Playbuilder Programme flows from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) consultation on the national play strategy, and is a key commitment in the Governments "Children's Plan", launched in December 2007.
- 1.2 This programme invests £235m nationally in children's play for three years from 2008 to 2011. A variety of freely accessible play facilities are to be developed targeting the 8-13 year age range specifically. The programme is intended to develop public play spaces close to where children live, make them safe, but also interesting, exciting and stimulating, whilst available to all.
- 1.3 Promoting an increase in active, imaginative and adventurous play are important elements of the programme, as is the participation of children, their parents, and community members. Local MPs and elected members are also expected to be involved in the development process.
- 1.4 Playbuilder play areas will need to meet criteria set out by the DCSF in five key areas:
 - 1) **More places to play:** responding to children's demands for high quality play spaces in every area;
 - 2) **Supporting play throughout childhood:** improving provision through a range of settings for children of all ages;
 - 3) **Playing safely:** providing safe, accessible and stimulating places for children to play;
 - 4) **Child-friendly communities:** engaging communities and involving children in decisions; and
 - 5) **Embedding play in local priorities:** ensuring leadership and effective delivery in every local area.
- 1.5 A new national indicator for play NI 199 Children's and Young People's satisfaction with parks and play areas will be rolled out from April 2009, which will run alongside the PlayBuilder programme.

- 1.6 There is an expectation that various sites/elements of sites will provide "Natural Play". This entails the use of natural materials such as timber, stone, and encouraging children to play/interact with the general landscape (trees, rocks, mounds and planting etc).
- 1.7 Wirral Council applied to DCSF in 2008, to be a Play Pathfinder, and was awarded Playbuilder status. The funding allocation offered to Wirral Council under Playbuilder status is £1,129,445 capital and £45,648 revenue. No match funding is required.
- 1.8 Over the two-year programme period 2009-2011, this funding is expected to support the development (or redevelopment) of a minimum of 22 play areas across Wirral. Revenue funding can be used at the discretion of the local authority for relevant activities to support the development of the scheme.
- 1.9 The initial Play Pathfinder application had been prepared by Officers from Youth and Play Service and the Parks & Countryside Service, (Regeneration Department). This has led to further joint working on the development of the Project Plan required by DCSF. An initial Draft Plan has already been submitted to DCSF for approval, and Officers are currently developing the project Plan for submission in April. The Plan will explain how it is intended to comply with the key criteria and list the 22 proposed sites to be developed.
- 1.10 Play England has been appointed by DCSF to help deliver the Government's vision for the future of play. Play England will support and challenge local authorities receiving funding under the Government's new play Pathfinder and Playbuilder programmes.

2.0 Project Management

- 2.1 A Project Manager will be appointed to manage the delivery of the PlayBuilder programme reporting to the Wirral Play Partnership and PlayBuilder Management Board. The Head of Branch, Participation and Inclusion Branch will chair this group and oversee the project.
- 2.2 The delivery of the PlayBuilder programme will be commissioned to the Parks & Countryside Service, and managed by Project manager who will provide quarterly reports to the Strategic Lead for Play in the Youth & Play Service. This will be reported to the Wirral Play Partnership and the Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee (YAPSAC), and when appropriate Cabinet update reports will be submitted. The Project manager will also have to report to the monthly Departmental Capital Monitoring Group.
- 2.3 Wirral Play Partnership is the key mechanism for cross-service and departmental working in the development and promotion of play in Wirral. The Play Partnership includes Councillor representation; the membership is drawn from a wide range of departments within the authority, and also includes local voluntary and community organisations. A Councillor has been appointed as the Play Champion and chairs the Wirral Play Partnership.
- 2.4 Due to the timescales involved and the grant conditions, year 1 projects have been selected based on previous consultation, existing community driven projects, match funding opportunities and also sites where there are strong user/Friends groups.
- 2.5 Initial, year 2 sites have been proposed as part of the requirement of the PlayBuilder project plan to be submitted to DCSF before the deadline on 30 March 2009. However

these sites will be subject to further consultation and negotiation to ensure a strategic approach to the location of play areas.

- 2.6 The identified Year 2 play sites complement the previously chosen Year 1 play sites and ensure that there are improved play facilities across the borough.

3.0 **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Wirral has been allocated a Playbuilder capital and revenue grant from DCSF as follows:-

Playbuilder capital			Minimum Number of play areas/year		
09/10	10/11	total	09/10	10-11	total
£530,952	£598,493	£1,129,445	11	11	22
Playbuilder revenue					
2009-10		2010-11		Total	
£27,389		£18,259		£45,648	

- 3.2 Each grant will be paid in two equal instalments in 2009-10, the first instalment on or before 30 April 2009 and the second instalment on or before 28 February 2010.
- 3.2 Children & Young Peoples department will receive the grant payment from DCSF. Parks & Countryside Service will then place an internal order to the Regeneration Department for the work required. The total cost of the PlayBuilder programme must be funded through the DCSF grant. There is no additional capital or revenue funding available and all costs, fees, contingency, retentions and any other internal costs must be contained within the DCSF allocations.
- 3.3 The Parks and Countryside Services, Landscape team will be permitted to charge fees for professional services to the capital amount, which are estimated to be 15%. This includes design development, tender and contract management of the sites selected.
- 3.4 The Council is only permitted to carry forward a maximum of 5% of the capital grant for 2009/10 into 2010/11 to meet imminent expenditure payable at the beginning of 2010/11. Any sums remaining after this period will become repayable to the DCSF.
- 3.5 Playbuilder authorities have to comply with HM Treasury guidelines in the procurement of goods and services for which it receives grant, so as to secure best value for money. In particular, contracts of work, equipment, stores and services etc. awarded shall be placed on a competitive basis, unless there are good reasons to the contrary. Tendering procedures shall be in accordance with the EU Procurement Directive and UK Procurement Regulations, where applicable and any additional guidance issued by the DCSF.
- 3.6 Revenue funding can be used at the discretion of the local authority for relevant activities to support the development of the scheme, such as – project management costs, required consultancy, additional design costs, community action/consultation, and social marketing.
- 3.7 No new play areas are currently being proposed, the sites are existing facilities which are currently maintained by the Parks and Countryside service, and will continue to be covered under their maintenance resources, (there is no additional funding available for maintenance in this program).

4.0 Staffing Implications

A Project Manager (part-time) will be appointed and funded through the allocated revenue budget of the Playbuilder programme.

5.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

5.1 Wirral's PlayBuilder programme reflects inclusiveness and promotes equal opportunities and access.

6.0 Community Safety Implications

6.1 Community safety issues may arise through the site selection process, specifically regarding safe routes to play and road safety issues.

7.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

7.1 There are no specific Local Agenda issues arising from this report.

8.0 Planning Implications

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

9.1 The improved play facilities will be freely accessible and free of charge to children and families and will target those areas of most need, as identified in the play audit.

10.0 Social Inclusion Implications

10.1 The projects reflects Wirral's commitment in ensuring children have equal access to play and be able to participate in local play opportunities.

11.0 Local Member Support Implications

11.1 The programme specifically requires the involvement of locally elected members, and they will be part of the decision making process through their involvement in Wirral's Play Partnership.

12.0 Background Papers

12.1 Draft PlayBuilder action plan
Play areas map
Local Governance Arrangements for Play

Recommendations

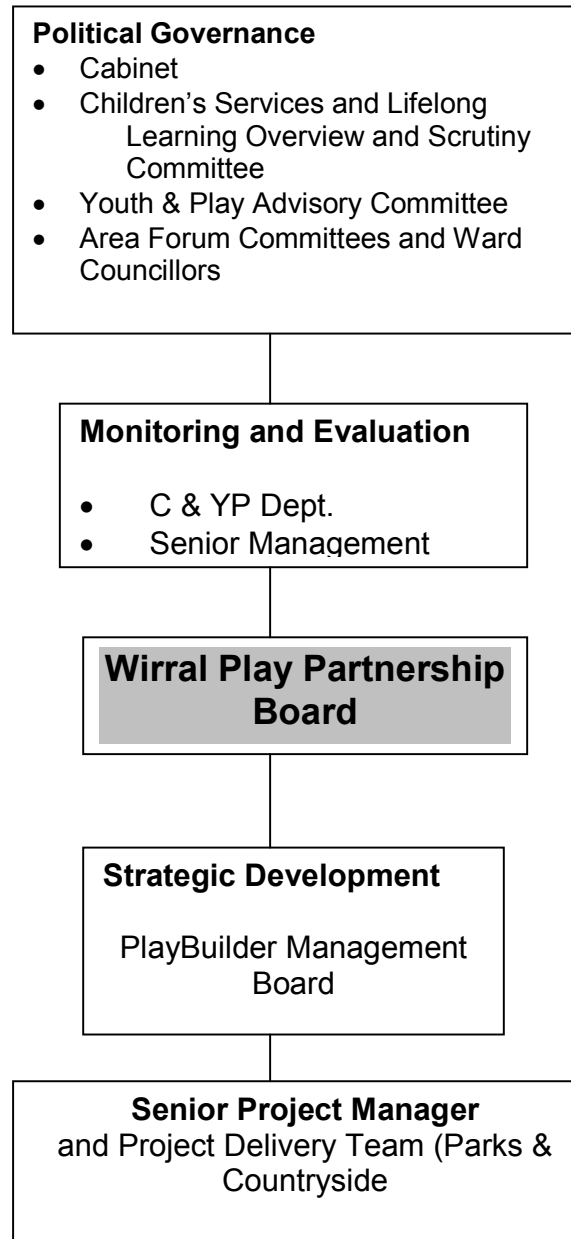
1. That the funding of £1,129,445 Playbuilder capital and £45,648 revenue from the DCSF to improve 22 play areas over the course of the next two years, be allocated in accordance with the project plan, and be included in the Children & Young Peoples department Capital Programme for 2009/2010 & 2010/2011.
2. That approval be given for the sites identified for year one expenditure (2009/10).

3. That subject to further consultation with the Play Partnership the proposed year 2 sites be considered as projects for year two (2010/11).

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

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Appendix A- Local Governance Arrangements for Play



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Wirral Council
Playbuilder
Project Plan
2009-2011



1) Overview of Project

- 1.1 Wirral's has a strong strategic commitment to play, with an already established cohesive play infrastructure. The Wirral Play Strategy and the five year Implementation Plan 2008-2012, sets out Wirral's key strategic aims and objectives to deliver its vision for play.

Wirral Council's vision statement for Play:

"Wirral Council recognises that every child has the right to play, and that play is essential to a child's life and vital to its development."

By Working with local communities, public agencies and voluntary agencies, it is committed to working towards providing and maintaining play opportunities sufficient in quantity, quality and range to meet the needs of children in Wirral.

- 1.2 Wirral has an extensive stock of existing equipped play areas, spread across the Borough. However, a large proportion of these play areas are now out-dated and no longer suited to the needs of children and young people today.

The PlayBuilder programme will revitalise children's access to local play provision through borough wide improvements to outdoor play spaces. It will target those areas of Wirral with current poor provision, as highlighted in the Wirral Play Strategy and the Asset Review.

The PlayBuilder programme and the BIG Lottery programme will be strategically linked through the process of community engagement and a planned approach adopted to ensure better and more improved play opportunities are delivered.

2) Which Fair Play aspirations are you seeking to achieve and how

The Fair Play Themes fit in with Wirral's strategic play objectives project and will have a major impact on improving the quality of outdoor play provision on Wirral.

1. Increase the number of opportunities for children and young people to engage in free play activities in areas of identified need.

2. Enable more children and young people to participate in a range of inclusive and accessible play experiences.
3. Improve children and young people's personal safety and reduce the fear of playing beyond the confines of their home environment. i.e. Parks and Open Spaces.
4. Consult with more children, young people and the Community, in the design, planning and delivery of play provision.
5. Improve the quality and the play value of local equipped play areas to include more varied and challenging equipment, which allow children to test their boundaries and take risks.

Overall, the programme will enable children to have more choice, where they want to play and decide what they want to do when they are there. It will raise the profile of play in local communities; creating more and better informal safe play opportunities and better outcomes for children and young people. It will seek to further embed play within local priorities and provide a cohesive framework for Playwork delivery which local and national performance indicators.

3) How will you work across service departments within the authority?

Wirral Play Partnership is the key mechanism for cross-service and departmental working in the development and promotion of play in Wirral. The Play Partnership includes representatives from a wide range of departments within the authority and also local voluntary and community organisations, including representation from three Councillors.

A Councillor has been appointed as the Play Champion and the Wirral Play Partnership has evolved through cross-sector representation from the voluntary and statutory sectors. These have enhanced the profile and importance of play within Wirral communities and across service departments. The Play Partnership and the development of the play strategy has also brought together agencies to strategically plan, analyse, prioritise and identify gaps in the delivery of play. Children and young people were also involved in this process of planning and delivery and are consulted about their play need and preferences.

The development of the Wirral Play Partnership and the formulation of the integrated delivery of Children's services have served to support and embed play in local infrastructure. It is open to any agency or local group committed to supporting the development of children's play in Wirral.

Play Partnership meetings are used to monitor the progress of the Play Strategy and as a forum to discuss issues that effect young people's access to play. The group can then decide whether any other service providers need to be invited to future meetings to see how these issues can be alleviated.

<p>Wirral Play Partnership Membership: Chair of YAPSAC, Children's Service & Lifelong Learning Overview Scrutiny Committee Children & Young People's Dept, Wirral MBC, Head of Participation & Inclusion Link Forum- Voluntary and Community Sector Rep. Friends Of Parks Wirral Play Council Councillor Representatives Youth & Play Service Early Years/Surestart/Children's Centres Wirral Children's Fund Heads of Schools Parks & Countryside Extended Schools Community Service Sports Development Culture-Libraries Health & Safety Aiming Higher For Disability</p>	<p>Play Champion Groundwork PE Advisory Sport Youth Offending Service Community Safety Mersey Travel BME Groups WIRED Looked After Children Health Transport Housing- Riverside Wirral Partnership Homes Child Protection Anti-Social Behaviour Team Community Safety Police Fire Service Road Safety Forward Planning Woodcraft Folk</p>
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Voluntary Sector Play

Since 1974, play in Wirral has been firmly established within the voluntary play sector. This has provided a solid foundation on which to build play provision which has evolved directly from community engagement and local voluntary support. Wirral Council works in partnership with the voluntary play sector to strategically develop play and support mechanisms to help embed play in local provision. The development of other plans, strategies and proposals for services is crucial to an effective sustainable policy. In particular the development of Play Strategy and joined-up thinking has led to new approaches towards the provision of appropriate, inspiring, challenging, inclusive and sustainable play.

4) Provide an overview of your authority's strategic approach to play and how it links to local spatial planning frameworks, and relevant strategies on community safety and transport (this should be reflected in both your Children and Young People's Plan & Sustainable Community Strategy).

4.1 In April 2006, Wirral Council created a Children's and Young People's Department for the borough. The authority works closely with other statutory and third sector agencies and to provide key quality services for children, co-ordinated through a Children and Young People's Partnership Board. Play sits within the Youth & Play service in the Children's and Young People's Department. The Wirral Play Strategy 2007-2012 (see link below) contributes to meeting Wirral's specific outcomes as outlined in the Children and Young People's plan and has a number of key priorities which strategically link with other plans including transport and community safety

http://active.admin.ad.wirral.gov.uk/LGCL/100003/200104/content_0000349.html

Priority 1

Enable greater access to freely chosen play and a wide range of quality play opportunities

- Transport and accessibility
- Localised play provision
- School
- Health
- Safety and Risk

Priority 2

Develop quality play environments and standards for play

- Local standards for play
- Enriching play environments

Priority 3

Promote community involvement, engagement and mediation

- Community engagement
- Community involvement

Priority 4

Establish and effective delivery mechanism for play

- Information and advice
- Network support
- Raising profile and importance of play
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Play training and professional development

Priority 5

Enable children and young people to express their views and opinions about the development of play

- Consultation and involvement

4.2 Wirral Children & Young People's Plan 2008-2011

Wirral Council produced a single strategic Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011 for all services affecting children and young people, including play and leisure.

http://www.wirral.gov.uk/LGCL/100005/content_0002189.html)

Wirral's plan covers all services provided for children and young people in the borough and brings together all plans to improve their lives and enable them to achieve their potential. It sets out a vision for children and young people and details the key priorities and actions for delivering the plan. Play contributes to meeting Wirral's specific outcomes is a key component of the plan with its own priority for improvement in the *Positive Contribution* outcome.

'Children and young people have access to a range of appropriate play opportunities which meet their needs'

Play features significantly in the Wirral's children and young peoples plan, which shows an on-going commitment to play and a strategic approach in sustainability and the delivery of child-centred services. Play is an important factor in a number of national indicators and local priorities.

- NI 57 Children and young people's participation in high quality PE and sport
- NI 48 Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents
- NI 56 Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6
- NI 199 Children and young people's satisfaction with play areas

4.3 More Equal, More Prosperous - A Sustainable Community Strategy for Wirral

Currently, a public consultation process is now underway with regard to Wirral's draft Sustainable Community Strategy - *Wirral 2025 – More Prosperous, More Equal*. The draft strategy has been produced by Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership. The document sets out a number of key challenges which Play can have a positive impact. Wirral in partnership will plan and take action together to deliver:

- **A strong local economy** for Wirral;
- **Safer, stronger communities** in all parts of the borough
- The best possible **health and well-being** for all families and individuals
- Excellent **life chances for children and young people**
- A high quality **living and working environment**
- **Sustainable, appropriate housing** for all

4.4 Wirral's corporate priorities

Play also has a key input into a number of Wirral's corporate priorities:-

Providing Educational and Cultural Opportunities for all Extending Learning Opportunities

- Supporting the work of Sure Start and encouraging play groups, holiday
- activities, outreach and childcare opportunities
- Ensuring that activities for young people are accessible and reflect their needs and
- Aspirations

Improving the Health of Wirral People Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles

- Increasing the number and quality of play areas
- Improving access and use of recreational facilities and services

Making Wirral Safer

Reducing Crime and the Fear of Crime

Reducing Anti-Social Behavior

- Improving safety in parks
- Actively working through the Youth Service and other agencies to engage young people, to listen to them and to provide positive forms of recreation and activity
- Supporting and encouraging play schemes, holiday activities and outreach programmes for young people

5) Briefly outline how this project fits strategically to Lottery Play projects.

The PlayBuilder programme and the BIG Lottery projects are intrinsically linked in terms of strategic approach and final delivery which will ultimately benefit children and young people's access to improved and better play opportunities. The Wirral Play Strategy and Implementation Plan contextualises the overall objectives, actions and targets we will meet as part of a comprehensive delivery plan for Play.

A number of the key recommendations of Wirral's Play Strategy fit with the ambitions of the Play Builder programme. In particular:-

1.0 - Enable greater access to freely chosen play and a wide range of quality play opportunities

Objective 1.6 - Enhance local areas for play to increase play value

Objective 1.7 – Increase and improve available facilities for children and young people in areas of most need

2.0 - Develop quality play environments

Objective 2.5 – Incorporate more natural features into local play spaces

3.0 - Promote community involvement and mediation

Objective 3.2 – Support the role of local community groups in the role stewardship and involvement to enhance and develop local play provision

Objective 3.4 –Promote opportunities to develop play opportunities with Friends of Parks

5.0 - Enable children and young people to express their views and opinions about the development of play

Objective 5.1 - Provide opportunities for children and young people to be involved and consulted in the development and delivery of play provision

These key findings informed the main priorities of the Play Strategy and Implementation Plan 2007-2012 and were also translated into ideas for the BIG lottery funded portfolio of projects and the PlayBuilder Programme. The Playbuilder programme and projects it delivers will compliment and enhance those projects being delivered through the Big Lottery

- Safer routes to play and feeling safe
- More opportunities for informal supervised play in parks/open spaces
- More risk and challenge in equipped play areas
- Access to natural play environments
- Presence of trained community play workers
- More inclusive play opportunities
- Use of schools after hours for community play activities
- Formal supervised play provision e.g. open access play scheme all year round

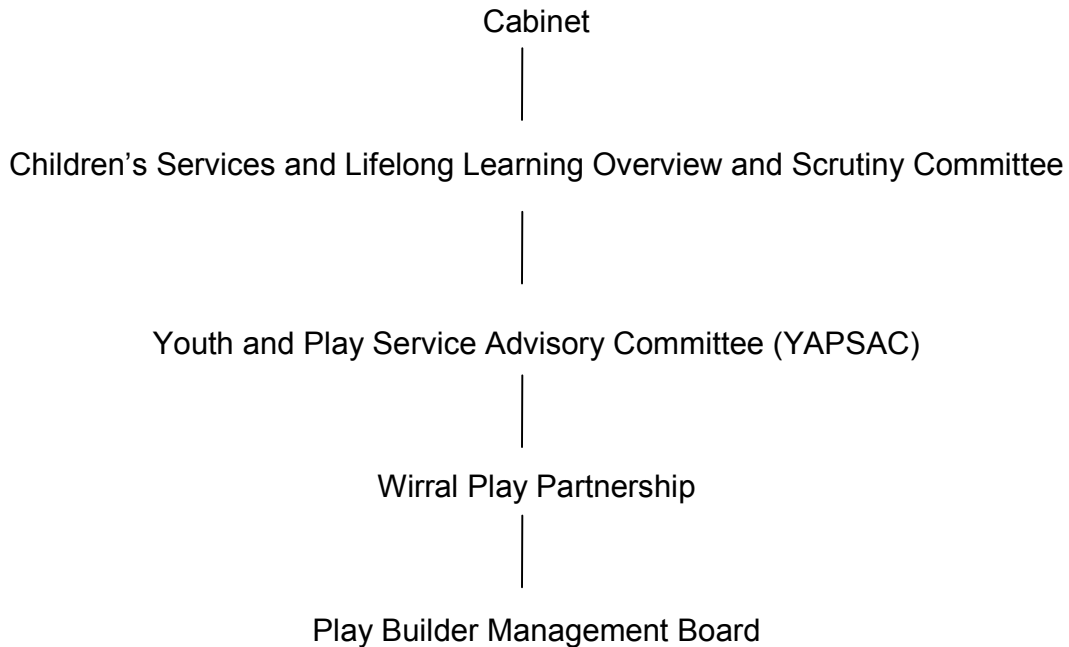
6) Briefly outline local governance arrangements

The responsibility for the DSCF PlayBuilder Programme and reporting to Cabinet sits with the Children and Young People's Department, Participation and Inclusion Branch. The Head of Branch has overall responsibility for ensuring the success of the project. (see appendix A).

An identified Senior Project Manager will be appointed to manage the delivery of the PlayBuilder programme reporting to the Wirral Play Partnership and PlayBuilder Management Board.

The Playbuilder programme will reported to elected members through the following reporting mechanism.

Reporting Mechanism



7) **Briefly outline project management arrangements for this project.**

The PlayBuilder programme will be commissioned to the Parks & Countryside service and managed by the Senior Project manager and who will provide quarterly reports to the Strategic Lead for Play in the Youth & Play Service. This will be reported to the Wirral Play Partnership and the Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee (YAPSAC). The Strategic Lead for Play will report quarterly to elected members through YAPSAC and the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the delivery of the PlayBuilder programme. Where appropriate Cabinet update reports will be submitted.

There will be quarterly monitoring to agreed milestones which reports to the Departmental Management Team which identifies areas when there is need to provide additional support. The key milestones will have specific deadlines monitored using the Performance Information Management System.

The budget for the project will be monitored through monthly financial statements by the Senior Project manager and the Finance section of the Children and Young People's Department. This will monitor actual spend against projected budget to ensure cost effective management of the portfolio and delivery of the projects within the designated timescales.

The Wirral Play Partnership will provide support for the projects led by Senior Project manager. Individual monitoring meetings will be scheduled, to progress milestones, monitor outcomes, provide supervisory support (where appropriate), and to act as a sounding board to support the development of the project.

Regular written reports will be provided on the projects and strategies to improve practice will be discussed and disseminated. Observing the delivery project in action and involving children and young people in accessing quality of provision against set standards.

The programme will be delivered using Prince 2 methodology or similar.

8) Provide details of the staffing arrangements for this Project

A project team has been set up, and an implementation and reporting framework is being developed for Wirral's PlayBuilder programme.

Wirral will identify a Senior Project manager to ensure the success of the project within the 2 year timescale of the programme.

The Playbuilder Management Board will link directly and report to the Wirral Play Partnership. This includes the following representatives:

Head of Branch, Participation & Culture, C & YP Dept. (Peter Edmondson)
Strategic Lead on Play (Deputy Head Youth & Play Service, Steve Chan)
Head of Parks and Countryside (Dave Cowling)
Principal Officer, Parks and Countryside (Roger Calvert)
Senior Landscape Architect (Jackie Smallwood)
Senior Project Manager (tbc)
Elected member (tbc)
Principal Manager - Finance
Play England Representative

The group will be tasked to:-

- ensure the project meets its aims and objectives, approve project briefs and recommend project expenditure.
- report to the Wirral Play Partnership and brief elected members.
- monitor and evaluate project progress.
- recommend sign off individual projects.
- advise on design brief and specification.

9) Continued engagement

There will be continued engagement with the local community, children and young people throughout project development and construction. The findings and consultation methodology of the Play Strategy will form the basis for continued community engagement. Children and young people from local feeder primary schools and play facilities will participate in on-site design and development of the play areas. This will take the form of regular update meetings, correspondence, bulletins and possible hands on involvement on site through planting or the installation of artwork etc., whichever is appropriate for each project.

Each new or improved play space will have to fit in strategically with local play area plans and local community groups, friends of parks, will be involved in the process.

10) Details on development of play areas

Once the first years site selection has been agreed, relevant schools, community and user groups will be contacted to develop a design for the proposed site.

The Parks and Countryside Service Landscape Team within the Council's Regeneration Department will implement the project, including the design development and procurement of the construction contract.

Wirral has already carried out a comprehensive play audit. The level of need and analysis was determined through a comprehensive public consultation and play audit, a number of surveys were undertaken including a children and young people's, schools play audit, public playground survey and six focused neighbourhood studies.

The views of stakeholders and children and young people informed how play provision could be improved and targeted to those areas of most need. This led to the production of the Wirral Play Strategy which set out a framework of Wirral's understanding of play and its commitment to ensure all children and young people living within the Wirral area have access to quality play provision.

Partnership work with the Play service will enable further neighbourhood consultation to be carried out with children and young people, particularly on individual play area location.

In addition to this work carried out for the Play Strategy, Wirral has since had a comprehensive Green space asset review which also evaluated existing play facilities. The findings of this review will also be used as part of the site selection process and can also provide baseline information on which to measure the improvements after project completion.

The PlayBuilder programme will deliver the following projects in 2009-10:

1. Meols Rec. Play Area
2. Harrison Park
3. Ashton Park
4. Tower Grounds
5. Woodlands
6. Newferry Park
7. Irby Park
8. Birkenhead Park
9. Newton Park
10. Victoria Park
11. Bromborough rec.

The selected projects will have detailed individual project plans. Play spaces/areas chosen to benefit from PlayBuilder will be located within Parks and Open Spaces. One scheme (Birkenhead Park) will require planning permission in the first year of the programme. The involvement and consultation of local residents, user groups and Friends groups in the development of the project should raise any problems early in the programme, and also aid the planning process.

Projects to be delivered in the second year will be chosen using a selection process agreed by the Wirral Play Partnership. The following rationale and range of factors will be used:

- Geographical Location
- Identified area of deprivation
- Child obesity levels
- Child population levels within ward boundary
- Strategic findings of the Play Strategy
- Involvement of children and young people
- Quantity of play areas (Play Strategy and Green space asset data)
- Quality of play areas (Green space asset data)
- Support and link with play projects (BIG Lottery projects)
- Level of community support and stewardship
- Accessibility and Safety
- Maintenance cost
- Potential additional match funding to enhance project brief

Key targets, milestones, charts and timelines using various project management tools to be produced on project approval.

11) Innovation

Innovation in terms of the design of the play areas will be linked to local needs and interests and will be tailored to each site location.

It is one of Wirral's play priorities to provide challenging equipped play areas that allow children to test boundaries and explore risk.

A number of improvements will be made to play areas, with more risk and challenging play features built into the design. This template for design of play areas will provide a benchmark and a more innovative approach to the design and delivery of fixed play areas. Children and young people's views and involvement in the design, planning and delivery will be intrinsic to the development of the improved play areas.

In areas of identified need and in partnership with user groups and friends of Parks groups increase the value of the existing play provision through the inclusion of more varied and challenging equipment, which will allow children to test boundaries and explore risk. These facilities will endeavour to be fully inclusive, and will be developed through direct engagement with young people, with particular emphasis on the 8-13 year old target group.

Site visits to view similar projects in other areas will be arranged to share good practice and investigate the possibilities to be included in the local design brief. This will include trips for children and young people who will have opportunity to share views and ideas with their peers.

Community Play Rangers through the BIG Lottery children's play programme will support children's access and safety to encourage the use play areas, and generate interest and involvement from the local community by promoting the benefits of play.

12) Engagement

Wirral has a history of working in partnership with local residents, community groups, Friends groups and other stakeholders, and also has experience of developing schemes with young people using various funding streams including Lottery Fair Share/Big, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Youth Opportunities funding and council own Capital funds. An example of this was young people applied for Youth Opportunity funding (YOF) consulted with local residents and an area forum to gain wider support and credibility for the scheme. The group were awarded funding through the YOF, which is made up of a panel of Young people, and the scheme was implemented providing a new play area for younger children and specific facilities for young people which met their needs.

The views and input of children, parents and the wider community will be captured through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and Play days.

13) Best practice

Wirral will use its existing regional and national links to share good practice with other neighbouring partners. Wirral projects have been used on a number of occasions as case studies. This includes the National Play Strategy Children Now, and Play England, North West publications. Wirral employees and voluntary play agencies regularly conferences and seminars to seek to learn from other authorities and share good practice.

The Parks & Countryside Service are members of Greenspace North West, which is part of a national network. The primary function of this forum is to share ideas and best practice. We will be able to share our PlayBuilder experiences through the forum which will be circulated to the Network both regionally and nationally.

14&15) Access & Safety

The selection of the 22 Play sites to benefit from the PlayBuilder will be based on the Play audit, assessment of local need and ongoing consultation.

Wirral's BIG Lottery Fund portfolio 'Play in the Peninsular' will be intrinsically linked with the Play Pathfinder proposal. It will support children's access to outdoor play space through Community Play Rangers and a 'provision together' approach enabling vulnerable children and young people to access local play provision and engage with their peers.

The new and improved play areas will encourage and enable physically active play; which are attractive to 8-13 year olds; and which more children, including disabled children, can access safely. They will be open access, free of charge and with children generally free to independently come and go as they please. They will increase the range of play opportunities in fixed play areas, provide opportunities for children to experience risk, be challenged and stimulate children's abilities and development. We will actively engage with children and young people at an early stage to get them involved in the design development of play sites. Location and entry access points will be considered in the overall design brief to encompass children's patterns of usage and improve access and safety to play areas.

A full risk assessment will be carried out for each individual PlayBuilder project.

Community Play rangers will monitor usage and enhance the use of the play areas by supporting children in their play and increasing their 'feel safe factor'.

Ensuring Parental Confidence – address parental concerns for children's safety, through working closely with local schools, community groups and local parents to promote the "Play Safe" campaign.

On-going dialogue through the Play partnership with Road Safety will look at establishing safer routes to play through educational awareness programmes and location of 20 mph zones around improved play areas with high level usage.

16) How will you ensure the sustainability of this project?

Misuse of green spaces is a complex issue, and community engagement/ownership, positive activities, quality spaces and good design all have a part to play in the sustainability and usability of the space.

The design quality and future maintenance implications of each proposed site will be assessed to ensure sustainability. A risk assessment in relation to potential vandalism will be carried out for the play sites, and this will influence the final design specification. Wirral will encourage and support local community groups to have ownership of their local play space, in terms of sustainability and stewardship.

The Parks and Countryside service within the Regeneration Department is responsible for providing and managing Wirral's fixed play provision. The maintenance of Play Areas is undertaken by two Playground Maintenance teams, who carry out weekly recorded condition inspections. These teams will also be involved with the design and delivery of the Playbuilder programme, which will ensure that they are aware of any changes to maintenance regimes and emphasis.

Sustainable Development

Wirral Council has a commitment to sustainable development, or "a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations". This commitment is part of our response to the global action plan for sustainable development Agenda 21. It numbers us amongst thousands of local authorities throughout the world all playing their part. The Council's general commitment is expressed through a corporate policy for sustainable development.

Wirral Council is a major consumer of goods and services. We recognise that the goods and services we purchase have an impact on the environment and human development both locally and globally. We aim to reflect our commitment to sustainable development and equality through the goods and services we purchase.

Wirral's' policy is Sustainable procurement should meet normal procurement imperatives (Best Value) but not by: -

- Exploiting labour, working conditions and pay.
- Undermining local cultures, values, practices and legal requirements.
- Damaging future economic and social prosperity of the individual community, country, and future generations.
- Exhausting or damaging natural resources, wildlife, habitat and bio-diversity.

- Polluting air, land and water.

The purpose of this policy is to help minimise impact on the environment by providing staff with information and practical help to assist them to buy or specify products that cause the least environmental damage.

17) **Detail of design brief agreements**

The design brief for each site will be drawn up in partnership with user groups and the project board.

The design brief for each project will show:

- Clear objectives
- Scope
- Timescales
- Costs

The development of the brief will consider the following local factors and the ten key principles outlined in the 'Design for Play' document produced by Play England and the Free Play Network for the DCSF.

- This would include information on historical background, a map of current site and surrounding area.
- The idea would be an inspirational design brief different from existing play areas. Each play area would consider its current location and how the design brief would fit in context with its environmental surroundings and meet the needs of the community.
- Each quality play area to include opportunities for play with the natural habitat, natural landscaping, vegetation i.e. boulders, low level flat stone slabs to climb on (for younger children). Also opportunities for challenging and adventurous play as identified by children and young people in the Wirral Play Strategy neighbourhood audit and consultation.
- Play areas to be accessible to disabled and non-disabled children
- A minimum of straight lines, lots of curves and organic shapes, a varied topography
- Make use of natural mounds and slopes, avoiding uniformity
- Access to some elemental play (water, earth and air)

- Shelter from the elements, or possibly children can temporarily add materials to form shelters which can be removed later
- Informal seating areas (use of natural logs, tree stumps) and enough quantity to encourage parental involvement
- Fencing - appropriate fencing sympathetic with area and environment.
- Surfacing – use of grass mats were possible, limit black safety surfacing to minimum requirements. Use areas of sand if possible to increase play value.
- Incorporating surrounding area into design to enhance play value of the overall site.
- Involve children and young people in the planning, design and delivery of provision i.e. preferred play equipment; incorporate their design ideas and features.
- Target age for play areas, and consideration of other ages in wider strategic play development.

18) Detail of Council approval process

A committee report will be produced detailing the draft action plan and site selection process. The Wirral Cabinet will then confirm final approval process and areas of delegated responsibility.

19&20 Evaluation

Wirral has a track record of delivering community based schemes on time and within budget. The sustainability of the sites after completion is ensured through the inclusion of the sites into the Councils inspection and maintenance programme.

As part of the Play strategy a comprehensive annual play review will be conducted to determine the overall progress of the BIG Lottery portfolio and the Play strategy Implementation Plan. An annual event will celebrate the success of the projects, and promote the importance of play across Wirral. Given the close links with the Pathfinder programme this will automatically be incorporated into this review, which includes mechanisms to involve children and young people and the local community in the monitoring of the plan.

A quantitative and qualitative analysis and evaluation of the portfolio will be conducted. Project milestones will be linked to portfolio outcomes through monitoring on a quarterly basis to measure performance of the portfolio. For example, the number of children, number of play sessions, impact of the projects to enable children to feel safer in their play space.

The Local Authority management evaluation tool kit - PIMS (Performance Information Management System) will be used to measure the success of the portfolio. Projects will have milestones to meet and will be measured against performance indicators using the traffic light system (red, amber and green). These will contribute to achieving the overall portfolio outcomes procedures.]

User satisfaction surveys and focus groups with children, young people and adults will be conducted to ascertain the success of the portfolio and improve future practice. Observations will be carried out to monitor play equipment usage and attendance at new and improved play sites. Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with delivery agents will ensure targets are being met and play provision is being effectively delivered locally. Below is an example of the monitoring and evaluation process.

Input	Output	Outcomes	Impact
Play areas x 4 districts New fixed play equipment	No. of children using play areas	20% more children feel safer playing out beyond confines of home	Increased physical activity contributes to the reduction of child obesity levels Help children manage acceptable risk Contributes to Play Strategy plan, local CYPP + ECM outcomes
Milestones: Design play areas, C & YP focus groups Collate baseline data Identify outdoor locations Deliver supervised outdoor play sessions			
Monitoring process		Evaluation process	

21& 22) Brief details of procurement & construction time lines in place

Project Planning

Once the grant has been awarded, a programme of works will be developed for each project. This will provide key target dates for the

implementation of each of the projects, from consultation and design development through to detailed design, tender process and construction period.

Design development and procurement

The landscape team will be responsible for the design development, specification and tendering for the project. They will be providing drawings and specifications for the equipment and materials to be used, and will then issue tender documents and contracts will be awarded, all in accordance with the Councils procedures for Landscape works.

A detailed two year procurement programme has not yet been produced, once the grant conditions and approval of the first year spend have been received this will be produced. However, an initial draft programme for Year 1 has been included.

Delivery and Involvement

The Parks and Countryside Service - Landscape Team within the Council will implement the project, including the design development, specification and procurement of the construction contract.

Parks and Countryside Service's Professional Landscape Team has a wealth of previous experience in delivering similar projects. They have implemented numerous grant aided projects, and accounted for outputs and financial results for Lottery funding including Big Lottery, Heritage Lottery and other funding bodies such as NWDA and SRB, Objective 1 ERDF, ESF, as well as smaller community led projects.

23) Opening date agreed

No precise opening dates have been set, but these will be planned once the first years schedule has been agreed, and consultation has started with the user groups, children and young people etc.

WORK PROGRAMME - YEAR 1

Month	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Works												
Community Consultation & Design Development	2	2						2		2		
		3		3	6	6	6		6		6	
		8	8	5	5	5		5		5		5
					7	7	7		7			
	4	4	4		4		4					
						9	9		9			
		10	10			10					11	
Planning							5	5	5			
Tender/Procurement												
Tender Preparation Tender Period	1		4	4								
		3	3		2	2		6	6			
			8			7	7					
				10				9	9			
								11	11	5	5	
Construction												
Contract period/On site Construction		1	1					1				
				3				2	2			
				8	10	10					5	5
								7	7	6	6	
							4	4		9	9	
											11	11
Opening Event (Indication only date to be agreed with Community)												
			1		3							
					8							

1	Meols Rec	4	Newferry Park	7	Irby Park	10	Victoria Park
2	Harrison Park	5	Birkenhead Park	8	Newton Park	11	Bromborough Rec.
3	Ashton Park	6	Woodlands	9	Tower Grounds		

24) **Risks & Contingency plans**

The following details the Wirral’s procedure and processes, in terms of risk.

Identifying Risks

The following risks have been identified for this project:

- Failure to secure funding
- Delays to the timing of the project

Impact Assessment

In order for the overall likely effect of the identified risks to be addressed, the anticipated impact for each risk must be chartered against the likelihood of that risk occurring. The table below shows a probability/impact Matrix. Once the probability and impact have been identified for each risk, an overall risk factor can be derived, ranging from low, through medium to high and very high.

Probability/Impact Matrix

		Impact		
		Low Minor impact on project schedule or cost; no impact on benefits	Medium Major impact on project schedule or cost; minor impact on benefits	High Major impact on project schedule or cost; major impact on benefits
Probability	Low Unlikely <15%	L	L	M
	Medium Fairly Likely >15%-<85%	L	M	H
	High Very Likely >85%	M	H	VH

The following table applies the Matrix to each risk identified in order to assess their impact.

RISK	DESCRIP.	IMPACT	PROBA-BILITY	OVERALL RISK	REASONING
Failure to secure funding	Failure to secure funding from the DCSF	High	Low	Medium	<p>Funding is sought from the DCSF</p> <p>The application has been invited; therefore, the probability of the funding source not being forthcoming is low.</p> <p>The impact of no funding for this project would be high, both in terms of the schedule, and of the proposed benefits, as the scheme would not proceed at all at the present time.</p>
Delays to the timing of the project	Delays in statutory approval of the scheme or appointment of the contractor or securing funding	High	Low	Medium	<p>Delays to the timing of the project could occur for a number of different reasons. Those suggested here include, appointment of the contractor, failure to secure funding within the proposed timescales and weather conditions during the construction phase. The impact of such delays on the project would be high, The probability of such delays occurring is assumed to be low since Wirral Council is experienced in managing such projects and has already put in place the necessary mechanisms which will allow for the project to progress smoothly.</p>

Results

The results of the impact assessment have clarified the risks. All risks have been identified as having a potentially significant impact on the project. Therefore, it is important to investigate ways of minimising the risks by identifying steps which can be taken to mitigate against them, or if this is not possible, to suggest contingency plans which could be put into place.

RISK	MITIGATION MEASURE
Failure to secure funding	Feedback to date has been very positive. Failure to secure the funding would result in the scheme would not proceeding.
Delays to the timing of the project	On receipt of funding approval a programme timetable will be developed to deliver the projects within the desired timescales

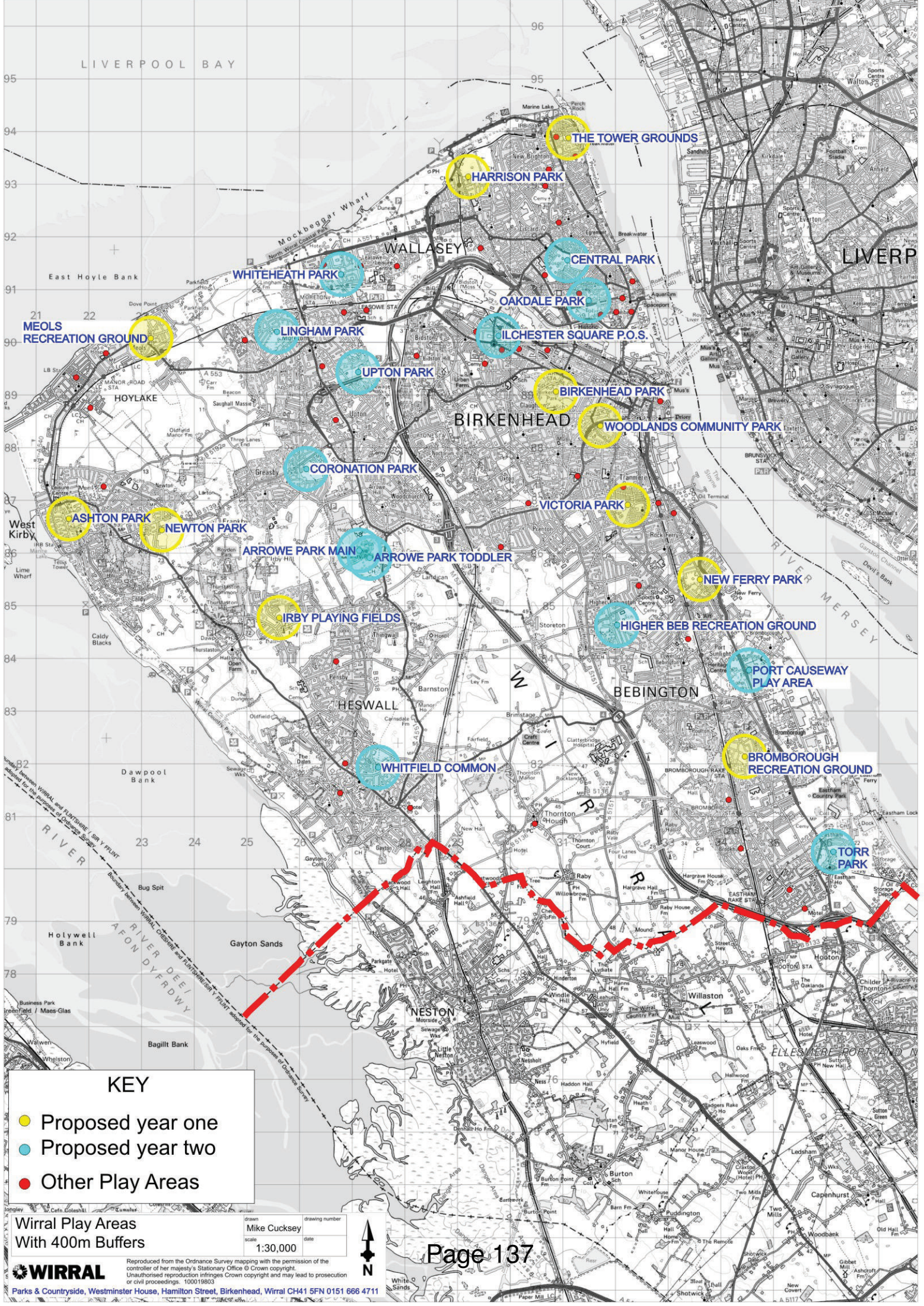
25) Financial forecast

Sites subject to grant conditions and project agreement. However, a first year expenditure programme for 2008-2009 would look like this.

<u>No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
1.	Meols Rec. Play Area	£10k
2.	Harrison Park	£30k
3.	Ashton Park	£50K
4.	New Ferry Park	£30k
5.	Birkenhead Park	£81k
6.	Woodlands play area	£50k
7.	Irby Park	£70k
8.	Newton Park	£50K
9.	Tower Grounds	£60k
10.	Victoria Park	£50k
11.	Bromborough Recreation Ground	£50k
	Total	531K

Year 2: Possible Project list:-

<u>No.</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
12.	Central Park	£60k
13.	Whiteheath Park	£80k
14.	Lingham Park	£40k
15.	Upton Park	£50k
16.	Ilchester Square	£49k
17.	Arrowe Park	£120k
18.	Coronation Park	£40k
19.	Whitfield Common	£10k
20.	Higher Beb. Rec.	£80k
21.	Port Causeway	£10k
22.	Torr Park	£60k
	Total	599K



KEY

- Proposed year one
- Proposed year two
- Other Play Areas

Wirral Play Areas With 400m Buffers

drawn Mike Cucksey
 scale 1:30,000
 drawing number
 date

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WIRRAL
 Parks & Countryside, Westminster House, Hamilton Street, Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 5FN 0151 666 4711

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23rd April 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL – FINAL DRAFT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress to date in developing a Sustainable Community Strategy for Wirral and presents a final draft of the strategy for consideration by Cabinet.
- 1.2 Given the Council's leadership role in relation to strategic planning at a borough-wide level through the Wirral's Strategic Partnership, Cabinet is recommended to approve the strategy and refer to Council in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000/2853.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government Act 2007 requires every local authority to develop a 'sustainable' community strategy.
- 2.2 The development of Wirral's Local Area Agreement for 2008-11 was a robust prioritisation and negotiation process aimed at ensuring that partners and stakeholders clearly identified the right improvement areas for Wirral. The outcomes of this process were central to the drafting of a broader Sustainable Community Strategy setting out Wirral's story of place and a shared understanding of local needs. Consultation was undertaken throughout 2008 with a variety of partnership groups, key stakeholders and the community to develop a consensus on the proposed delivery themes for the Sustainable Community Strategy, for example through the Area Forums.
- 2.3 Progress on developing the Sustainable Community Strategy was reported to the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement Partnership Boards during the course of 2008, and a report was presented to Cabinet on 25th September 2008 seeking approval for a proposed public consultation process and consultation draft. The public consultation period relating to the draft Sustainable Community Strategy began in October 2008 and ended in January 2009. Revisions have been made following the consultation and in response to other factors such as the additional challenges presented by the economic downturn. A final draft of Wirral's Sustainable Community Strategy, Wirral 2025, is now presented at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.4 It should be noted that, in line with the need to align the Community Strategy with the Local Development Framework identified in the Cabinet report of the 25th September, there has been a short delay between the close of the public consultation period and presenting the final draft. This was to ensure that any major findings of the recent

consultation relating to the Core Strategy element of the Local Development Framework could be reflected in the Sustainable Community Strategy vision.

- 2.5 This final draft of the Sustainable Community Strategy should be viewed alongside Wirral's Local Area Agreement (the 2009-11 refresh of which can be found at **Appendix 2**). It details the current improvement priorities for Wirral's Strategic Partnership and related targets and is therefore considered the medium-term delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

3. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 3.1 A broad range of responses were received from partners and statutory agencies, Council departments and the public. In summary, the key issues raised by respondents were as follows:
- 3.1.1 Turley Associates responded on behalf of Peel Holdings, and welcomed the support given to Wirral Waters within the strategy. It saw the identification of Wirral Waters as a key investment project as a reflection of the Council's commitment to deliver the transformational regeneration required in inner Wirral. Peel also detailed some of the projected outcomes of Wirral Waters and requested that this text be included in the strategy. Peel also commented on energy and climate change as key issues for the communities of Wirral and saw a need to establish commitments at all levels for renewable energy, fuel poverty and carbon reduction.
- 3.1.2 Several individual respondents also requested that climate change issues be further emphasised in the strategy, and gave legislative and national evidence to support this, for example in relation to the Climate Change Act. This issue was reinforced by comments from Wirral Wildlife, Wirral Environmental Network, and Transition Towns West Kirby.
- 3.1.3 There were also comments on the need to balance the economic and community focus of the strategy with environmental concerns, particularly the use of natural resources and biodiversity which came mostly from Natural England as a statutory consultee, and Wirral Wildlife (Cheshire Wildlife Trust). The responses outlined the importance of Wirral's unique natural assets, with its nationally and internationally significant sites, to residents, to health, to tourism and to the economy.
- 3.1.4 The Chief Executive of Merseytravel raised issues of transport and accessibility and argued that these were not given enough weight in the strategy, since they are topics that are always raised as being of prime concern to residents. Several individuals also raised points relating to sustainable transport and cycling facilities.
- 3.1.5 Other respondents included English Heritage, which advocated using the planning system to ensure sympathetic design, and the inclusion of heritage within the culture offer, and Wirral Partnership Homes, which wanted more recognition of the role and contribution to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy by registered social landlords.

4. OVERVIEW OF CHANGES

- 4.1 As set out in the report of the 25th September 2008, the consultation draft provided a starting point for debate with partners and the community and it was anticipated that the content of the strategy would evolve to reflect contributions from a wide range of stakeholders. The key ways which the strategy has been further developed are as follows:
- 4.1.1 All amendments and suggestions for additional narrative made by partner organisations responding to the public consultation have been included in the strategy as appropriate.
- 4.1.2 More emphasis has been given to the Partnership's commitment and approach to addressing issues of climate change adaption and mitigation in line with comments raised by a number of statutory and other consultation respondents.
- 4.1.3 Contextual factors such as the recession and the publication of new guidance in relation to Comprehensive Area Assessment have also necessitated appropriate additions to be made to the strategy to ensure that it fully reflects the challenges faced by the Council and its partners. The delivery framework for the strategy has also been updated to ensure, for example, that it reflects recent changes to partnership governance.
- 4.1.4 The structure, language and presentation of the document have also been reviewed to ensure that it is accessible. For example, abbreviations have been removed and / or explanatory notes provided. The strategy is now structured in four parts:
- Wirral's Story of Place;
 - Wirral 2025 – Vision and Strategy;
 - Partnership Principles;
 - Delivering the Strategy.

5. PROCESS FOR ADOPTING THE STRATEGY

- 5.1 The final draft of Wirral's Sustainable Community Strategy is now being circulated to members of Wirral's Strategic Partnership for adoption through the governance arrangements of partner organisations as appropriate.
- 5.2 The Council is required to formally adopt the strategy in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000/2853. It is therefore proposed that Cabinet refer the final draft of Wirral's Sustainable Community Strategy (Appendix 1) to the next full Council meeting for formal adoption. It is also proposed, given the partnership nature of the document, that Cabinet and Council give delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Wirral's Strategic Partnership to make any minor changes to the strategy identified by members of the partnership prior to its publication and launch (see 5.3 below).

5.3 As agreed at the Local Strategic Partnership away day in March 2008, plans for a formal launch of the Sustainable Community Strategy and 'sign up' by partners are now underway. Resources are being identified through the Partnership for publishing the document and a summary version, including illustrative maps and other images as appropriate.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report other than those identified in relation to publishing the Sustainable Community Strategy. Partner contributions are being sought in this respect.

7. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no additional staffing requirements arising from this report.

8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The views of Wirral's diverse communities have been sought as part of the consultation process through existing engagement mechanisms and Wirral's Voluntary and Community Sector Network (VCAW).

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The role of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to set out long-term sustainable solutions for the area.

11. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none directly arising from this report. The development of the Sustainable Community Strategy has been aligned with the emerging Local Development Framework as far as possible.

12. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none directly arising from this report. Addressing issues of poverty and deprivation is, however, central to the vision for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

13. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy refers to the role that Area Forums will take in identifying local priorities and action in line with Wirral 2025's delivery themes.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet, 25th September 2008, Proposed Sustainable Community Strategy Consultation

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the strategy and refer to Council in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000/2853.

14.2 Cabinet and Council are also recommended, given the partnership nature of the document, to give delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Wirral's Strategic Partnership to make any minor changes to the strategy identified by members of the partnership prior to its publication and launch.

JIM WILKIE

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE / DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

This report was prepared by Jane Morgan who can be contacted on 691 8140

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WIRRAL 2025

MORE EQUAL, MORE PROSPEROUS

A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Wirral 2025 should be viewed alongside Wirral's Local Area Agreement. This details the current improvement priorities for Wirral's Strategic Partnership and related targets and is therefore considered the medium-term delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Foreword from Councillor Steve Foulkes

Chair of Wirral's Strategic Partnership

Wirral is a borough with enormous potential and opportunities. It is poised for a momentous period of change that will see a raft of spectacular projects, heralding large-scale investment and boundless opportunities, making it a major contributor to the city region's growth agenda. For example, the UK's biggest regeneration project – Wirral Waters - is set to transform Birkenhead and Wallasey. This visionary £4.5 billion, 30 year redevelopment of Birkenhead and Wallasey docks will have a major impact on Wirral and the Northwest region.

Wirral residents experience some of the country's most notable variations in economic and social well being – a substantial percentage of Wirral's population lives within some of the country's most deprived areas, whilst there are also a large number that live in some of the country's most affluent areas. For many of our citizens there is an excellent quality of life, with good leisure facilities, an attractive coastline and countryside, good quality housing, good schools and quality employment opportunities. For some, the picture is very different, with pockets of high unemployment, low skills levels, poorer quality housing, unacceptable levels of anti-social behaviour and high levels of ill health.

The Wirral 2025 vision is therefore of ***a more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential.***

Partners in Wirral know that we need to overcome significant labour market challenges and agree that preventing and tackling worklessness and related deprivation (including child poverty) are priorities that must cut across strategic policies at a number of levels.

An ambitious Investment Strategy is in place that will drive the economic development of the Borough. This is led by a partnership board consisting of representatives of both the public and private sectors.

Wirral 2025 harnesses the goals of our Investment Strategy and demonstrates how statutory agencies, the private sector and the community and voluntary sector will work collectively to ensure that all communities and people can share in future prosperity. It sets the scene for partnership working in the borough for the years to come and will play a key role in meeting the borough's future challenges, by linking together key local authority and partner strategies such as the Wirral's Local Development Framework, the land use plan for the area.

Partners have already developed strong and effective partnerships with Wirral's voluntary and community sector, which has been at the forefront of much of our activity to tackle worklessness, deprivation and low skills within some of our most deprived neighbourhoods and disadvantaged groups.

We are beginning to tackle the key challenges facing Wirral through the delivery of our Local Area Agreement. This is a 3 year action plan which has been negotiated with central government to deliver improvements on Wirral's shared priorities. Wirral 2025 is ambitious in scope. However, Wirral's Local Area Agreement will balance this ambition with targeted activity. The improvement targets in our Local Area Agreement will address the key challenges identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Wirral 2025 will be reviewed annually using a ‘health-check’ approach to ensure that trends in achieving aims and objectives are moving in the right direction, and we will undertake a more detailed ‘health-check’ in 2011 to coincide with the final year of our current Local Area Agreement. ‘Health-checks’ will take into account updated evidence from key sources such as Wirral’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and will take a ‘you said’, ‘we did’ approach to reflect community and customer feedback. A major review and refresh of Wirral 2025 will take place every five years.

As we enter a period of worldwide economic instability and our residents and businesses in Wirral face change and uncertainty, it is even more important to ensure we continue to work towards delivering our vision. We remain committed to addressing inequalities across Wirral. Our new investment framework known as Working Wirral has been hailed by the Northwest Development Agency as an example of an approach to tackling worklessness that others should follow.

There is no doubt that we face challenging times but I am convinced that together we can face the challenges in front of us and grasp the opportunities we have to make Wirral a better place.

On behalf of Wirral’s Strategic Partnership, I am proud to commend to you our Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough – Wirral 2025.

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1. WIRRAL'S STORY OF PLACE

1.1 An Area of Contrasts

Wirral is a borough of enormous opportunity but it also a place of sharp contrasts, with the overall picture masking stark inequalities for local people. Many of our citizens enjoy an excellent quality of life, with good housing, schools and a high quality living environment. In certain parts of the borough, however, there are significant levels of deprivation. Within Wirral, localities range from the 26th most deprived in the country (around St James Church in Birkenhead) to one of the most affluent, or least deprived - in South West Heswall less than 6 miles away¹.

Some of the 3% most deprived areas in the country fall within the urban areas of Birkenhead and parts of Wallasey. These areas generally have a younger population profile than the Wirral average. They experience higher than average levels of anti-social behaviour and educational achievement at Key Stage 4 is below the Wirral average. Life expectancy is shorter than the Wirral average and a high percentage of those who claim Job Seekers Allowance in Wirral live in these areas. House prices are lower than the Wirral average although this does mean that there is greater availability of affordable housing. There are generally low levels of car ownership in these areas but there is good access to services by public transport. Although the quality of the built and surrounding environment can be poor in our deprived areas, every part of the borough is well served by public parks and open spaces.

In contrast there are areas of the borough (including Bebington and Clatterbridge, Heswall, Pensby and Thingwall and West Wirral) that have an older population profile where house prices are higher than the Wirral average and there is limited availability of affordable housing. There are low levels of deprivation, low levels of anti-social behaviour and educational achievement at Key Stage 4 is above average. Life expectancy in these areas is above the Wirral average, and there are high levels of car ownership. Most areas have relatively good access to services by public transport. These areas are well served for parks and open spaces with easy access to countryside and coastal areas.

The remainder of Wirral has a more mixed profile, with generally low levels of deprivation although some areas to the east of the Greasby, Frankby, Irby, Upton and Woodchurch Area Forum boundary², and in Leasowe, Moreton and Saughall Massie also fall into the most deprived 3% in the country.

In terms of deprivation, Wirral compares favourably with most of the other Merseyside local authorities, particularly Liverpool and Knowsley. However, in terms of employment deprivation, Wirral comes out as 8th worst in the country,

¹ Our understanding about deprivation in Wirral is supported by statistics taken from the national Index of Multiple Deprivation which combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. The Indices are used widely to analyse patterns of deprivation, identify areas that would benefit from special initiatives or programmes and as a tool to determine eligibility for funding.

² Wirral has 11 Area Forums, which cover the whole borough: Bebington / Clatterbridge; Bidston / Claughton; Birkenhead / Tranmere / Rock Ferry; Bromborough / Eastham; East Wallasey (Liscard / Seacombe); Greasby, Frankby, Irby, Upton, Woodchurch; Heswall / Pensby / Thingwall; Leasowe / Moreton / Saughall Massie; New Brighton / Wallasey; Oxton / Prenton; West Wirral.

behind Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, and Sunderland.

Wirral's population has declined from over 355,000 during the 1970s to 310,200 in mid-2007³. The population is skewed towards older age groups, with a lower proportion of younger adults and a higher proportion of older people than the averages for the rest of England and the North West. The fastest falling population categories are the 24 years and under age groups. The principal flows of population (i.e. people moving out of the borough to other areas) are out of Wirral to Denbighshire, Flintshire and Chester and into Wirral from Liverpool and the rest of greater Merseyside.

When asked, Wirral residents have consistently identified crime levels, clean streets and activities for teenagers as being important to residents and in need of improvement (through nationally mandated surveys undertaken in 2003 and 2006). In 2006, responses to Wirral's General Resident's Survey indicated that these topics were however less in need of improvement than in 2003, suggesting that residents were noticing the positive impact of community safety, youth activities and street cleansing initiatives in the borough. However, results from the Wirral Resident's Survey 2007 show that several topics have become important to a greater proportion of residents and also been stated as in greater need of improvement by a greater proportion of residents. The most significant change has been in the importance and need of improvement of the provision of affordable decent housing. This is in line with the national context.

1.2 Wirral's Economy

Challenges

It is clear that our economy in Wirral is under-performing. Although Wirral plays an important role in the City Region⁴ labour market – exporting substantial numbers of highly skilled workers to Liverpool, Chester and elsewhere – Wirral has a relatively small and low value economy. Earnings of workers in Wirral are below the national average. However, mainly as a result of the fact that many of our skilled residents work elsewhere, the earnings of residents are actually above national figures. Wirral has one of the lowest GVA per capita⁵ in Merseyside and the North West (56.7% of the UK average). In addition, our economy is growing relatively slowly and as a result is falling behind other parts of the City Region, the North West and the rest of the UK. Wirral is ranked as the eighth most deprived area of the country in relation to employment.

There are huge variations in levels of economic inactivity across Wirral – from over 56% in parts of Birkenhead and Tranmere, to less than 3% in parts of Heswall. Significant concentrations of economic inactivity go hand in hand with worklessness, child poverty and inequalities in relation to health, educational achievement and crime. There are also stark gaps in employment skills in our deprived communities.

³ Office of National Statistics

⁴ The City Region has the Core City of Liverpool at its centre surrounded by the local authority districts of St Helens, Wirral, Knowsley, Sefton, and Halton

⁵ GVA (Gross Value Added) is a measure of economic value and is used in the estimation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It measures the difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of raw materials and other inputs which are used in production

Wirral faces a number of economic challenges that must be addressed if it is to become a thriving place to live in, work in and visit:

- For every 100 people of working age in the borough, there are only 61 jobs;
- The gap between Wirral, the North West and national rates is significant in terms of all the main indicators of an enterprising economy, such as self-employment rates, business start up rates and business density, as well as GVA per head;
- As indicated earlier, more than 40,000 residents currently travel outside Wirral to access higher paid employment in Liverpool and Chester;
- There are low levels of enterprise and entrepreneurial activity in our borough, particularly amongst women and people from black and ethnic minority groups;
- Wirral has a higher than average proportion of the working age population on benefits and a quarter of all school children in Wirral qualify for free school meals. The people with the lowest qualifications are least likely to find employment; Wirral has a rate of just over 35% of working age population with no qualifications. There are close to 20,000 people claiming incapacity benefit, a significant number which has a clear impact on the economic performance of the borough;
- There is a shortfall in the quantity and quality of sites / premises for modern business needs;
- The VAT registration rate of businesses is amongst the lowest in the North West.

Over and above the challenges set out above, the UK economy is now officially in the midst of a recession, ending the extraordinary boom of the last decade. Conditions have deteriorated rapidly amidst global financial turbulences. The task for partners is to understand how Wirral's economy is being affected and respond in appropriate ways.

Moving in the right direction

The majority of respondents to a Wirral Citizen's Panel Survey in Spring 2007 thought that the local authority had been successful in supporting the economic regeneration of Wirral.

A comprehensive Investment Strategy is now in place to guide Wirral's economic development and full employment and enterprise strategies have been developed to create a workforce which meets the demands of employers. Partnership arrangements around this agenda have been strengthened further through merging a number of partnerships and groups to establish Wirral's Economic Development and Skills (WEDS) Partnership. This single partnership will deliver the economic development and enterprise outcomes within Wirral's Local Area Agreement.

Working Wirral brings together a number of resources (Working Neighbourhoods Fund, Deprived Areas Fund and the European Social Fund's Complementary

Strand) to commission activity to deliver the Investment Strategy priorities of tackling worklessness, improving skills levels and increasing enterprise, business growth and investment. This commissioning process is being overseen by Wirral's Economic Development and Skills (WEDS) Partnership in respect of employment and skills, with Wirral's Investment Strategy Board advising on the priorities for investment and business growth.

Wirral partners are developing a coherent and co-ordinated response to the recession. A critical issue is to understand how the impact is being experienced locally and devising measures to mitigate the impact. Regular liaison with individual businesses and business representative organisations is driving our responses. A range of new measures have already been introduced, ensuring that the Council pays all small and medium sized suppliers within 10 days, the introduction of a new range of business support mechanisms to provide additional grant support, and business and consultancy support.

Partners staged a 2 day conference at the Floral Pavilion in March 2009 aimed at providing direct support to assist companies experiencing difficulties in the current economic climate.

Partners have already done much to work with local people on jobs and skills. The Pathways to Work partnership scheme led by Job Centre Plus is helping people on benefits back into work. An innovative Reach Out service is in place giving confidential advice and support to people who have experienced problems in accessing employment, education and training. Nearly 200 people who had previously been unemployed for between one and 15 years are now in employment through Reach Out resulting in many families being moved out of the child poverty index.

There is a continuing development programme to meet intense demand for prime office and industrial locations. £150m has been invested in Wirral International Business Park and more than 200,000 sq ft of quality business units were developed in 2006 alone.

Tourism has already been boosted by Wirral's major events and impressive cultural offer (which now includes the new Floral Pavilion and Spaceport at Seacombe Ferry) and work is underway to develop a 5 year plan for the borough's cultural and leisure services. The Wirral Coastal Partnership brings together key stakeholders with an interest in Wirral's natural coastline asset, with the aim of maximising the visitor potential to the area. We will continue to capitalise upon Wirral's exceptional tourism assets and build upon the legacy of the successful Open Golf Championship and Capital of Culture year.

A Merseyside Rural Economy Steering Group has recently been established, bringing together the six Greater Merseyside Local Authorities, with St Helens as the lead. The aim of the group is to establish a clear evidence base of rural economic opportunities and challenges; to agree a common understanding of rural economic programmes and funding opportunities; and to understand the specific issues of each individual local authority.

Partners working together to improve our economy include:

- Birkenhead 6th Form College
- Business Link
- Chamber of Commerce
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust
- Community and voluntary sector
- Connexions
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Government Office North West
- Job Centre Plus
- Learning and Skills Council
- Merseyside Employer Coalition
- NHS Wirral
- North West Development Agency
- North West Trades Union Congress
- Private sector
- Probation Service
- Wirral Council
- Wirral Metropolitan College
- Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

1.3 Crime and Community Safety in Wirral

Challenges

Wirral has the lowest rate of recorded crime in Merseyside. Rates of burglaries, violent crimes, robberies and vehicle crimes continue to fall and are amongst the lowest in the country. Against a backdrop of improvements in levels of crime, certain communities of the borough continue to suffer higher levels of crime than others. Wirral's most deprived areas (roughly 10% of the borough) account for 30% of all recorded British Comparator Survey (BCS) crime on Wirral. These communities also suffer disproportionately from higher levels of violent crime. Much of this is violent crime in our town centres and is associated with alcohol and the night-time economy.

There has been a fall in residents' fear of crime. However, anti-social behaviour remains a significant issue for local people and, whilst performance is improving, anti-social behaviour still makes up a large percentage of the total number of reported incidents that the Police and other agencies deal with in Wirral.

Serious injury and death of road users and pedestrians in Wirral continues to be a significant challenge. Despite various successful initiatives such as cycle training, traffic calming and road safety neighbourhood regeneration initiatives, the borough still has particularly high rates of road casualties involving car users, child pedestrians and motorcyclists compared to other Merseyside authorities.

Moving in the right direction

As indicated earlier, Wirral is largely a very safe place to live, visit and work in. Wirral's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is proud of the impact joint working has had in making the borough safer. The Partnership is made up of the key agencies working to tackle crime and disorder as well as councillors and

community representatives. It is accountable for Wirral's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, which is reviewed every three years on the basis of an audit of crime and disorder in the borough and consultation with Wirral residents.

It is widely recognised by partners in Wirral that we need to continue to work together to reduce access to alcohol and improve education, treatment and enforcement to reduce overall crime. Wirral's Crime and Disorder Reduction and Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategies detail the preventative action undertaken to tackle the alcohol abuse that is key to reducing alcohol related crime.

The work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is delivered by a multi-disciplinary team which includes officers seconded from Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and Wirral's Family Support Unit. It is supported by a dedicated Community Safety Solicitor.

Neighbourhood policing is now well established in Wirral with eight Neighbourhood Teams, each led by an Inspector. Neighbourhood Teams include both Police Officers and Policy and Community Support Officers, who focus on providing reassurance and addressing issues affecting local communities.

Wirral's Youth Offending Service has achieved a consistently high level of performance.

In March 2007 Wirral was selected by the government as one of 40 *Respect* areas as part of the drive against anti-social behaviour. Many local initiatives have been put in place, including the Youth *Respect* Team. A Parenting Coordinator is now in post within the Anti-Social Behaviour Team. This specialist practitioner delivers parenting programmes for families engaged in significant anti-social behaviour. Wirral's *Respect* Bus visits public places so that local residents can get advice from a number of specialists on topics ranging from abandoned cars to youth nuisance.

Even though the issue of crime amongst Wirral's teenagers is still identified by residents as an area for improvement, the perception of 'youth disorder as a big problem' has reduced by 16.5% since 2005⁶. Working with young people is a recognised strength in Wirral, with a Beacon status award for Positive Youth Engagement⁷.

There are many projects and activities which have contributed to better engagement with young people and the broader agenda to make Wirral a safer place. Just some of these are:

- Merseyside's Fire and Rescue Service's work with young people in a number of ways to prevent hoax calls and anti-social behaviour, including early intervention projects and work with children and young people at risk;
- The *On Track* partnership approach to preventative work with disadvantaged youngsters at risk of becoming involved in crime;

⁶ Based on 2007 perception data

⁷ Beacon status is granted to selected authorities in recognition of excellence in a service area. The awards are designed to help local authorities to learn from each other and share best practice.

- A community involvement and heritage project focused around Birkenhead Park – *It's My Park* - delivered in partnership with Liverpool University, providing diversionary activities for children, tours for local schools and events for the local community;
- An intelligence-led approach from the local authority to ensure that that sports and recreation activities are directed where and when needed to prevent anti-social behaviour through the use of sports activities;
- A road safety campaign aimed at young men - *For My Girlfriend* - with a hard hitting reconstruction of a car crash, run by Wirral Council in partnership with the emergency services.
- A number of Respect Watch schemes run by Wirral Partnership Homes which seek to tackle the perception and fear of crime by managing anti-social behaviour 'hot spots';
- The Merseyrail *TravelSafe* initiative which has resulted in the whole of the Merseyrail network accredited under the National Secure Stations scheme. British Transport Police are also working in conjunction with Merseytravel on *Operation Shield* to identify and remove weapons from people using public transport;
- *Operation Hawk*, the successful Merseyside Police response to street level drug-dealing. This is a co-ordinated campaign which includes police operations, media and marketing activity, information gathering from the public and drug awareness promotion in schools.

Crime and community safety partners include:

- Community and voluntary sector
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Merseyside Police
- Merseyside Probation Service
- Merseytravel
- NHS Wirral
- Wirral's Anti Social Behaviour Team
- Wirral's Community Safety Team
- Wirral Council
- Wirral's Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)
- Wirral's Strategic Housing Partnership
- Wirral's Youth Offending Service

1.4 Health and wellbeing in Wirral

Challenges

Many Wirral residents enjoy excellent health and wellbeing. Although life expectancy is rising, there is a stark mortality gap between the most affluent and

the most deprived areas, with those in the most affluent areas living on average over 10 years longer than those in the most deprived areas. Wirral has the widest variation in mortality rates within the borough of all the Merseyside districts and one of the largest health inequalities in the Northwest.

For women, the main conditions contributing to the gap in life expectancy between Wirral and England are cancer and cardiovascular disease. For men, the main conditions are cardiovascular disease and digestive disorders (including cirrhosis).

Other key challenges in relation to tackling health inequalities are addressing alcohol harm and its related conditions and improving mental health. Figures suggest that around 65% of Wirral's 20,000 incapacity benefit claimants are claiming for a mental health condition. Partners also recognise that we need to continue to make progress in relation to lifestyle issues and obesity and respiratory illnesses such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Many of these issues can be linked to other deprivation indicators such as those around worklessness, as well as levels of educational attainment and aspiration.

Drug and alcohol misuse are linked to a wide range of issues over and above their impact on people's health. As highlighted earlier in the strategy, for example, in Wirral we have a clear understanding of how alcohol misuse is linked to levels of violent crime associated with the borough's night-time economy. Alcohol misuse and its impact on violent crime and hospital admissions are continuing challenges for the borough.

Wirral has an ageing population. 21% of Wirral residents are of retirement age and the population of older people aged over 65 is expected to increase. The population of people aged over 85 is set to increase by 15% by 2010. With the older age groups expected to be the fastest increasing population group by 2029, looking after the frail older persons population will become a major issue for the borough in the near future, impacting on health, social care and other services. Partners in Wirral also understand that people want to remain independent for as long as possible and to have choice in how they access services and this is a key consideration for partners in Wirral as they design services for the future.

Our ageing population will mean an increase in the number of people with long term conditions and a high risk of falls is likely to present significant challenges in relation to increased demand for hospital care and support to live at home. Falls are a major cause of disability and the leading cause of mortality due to injury in older people over 75.

It has been estimated that there will be a rise of 12% in the total number of people needing a learning disability service in Wirral by 2011 with the most significant increase of 20% in the 60-79 age group.

Moving in the right direction

The reduction of health inequalities is complex and requires consistent action across a wide range of agencies at national and local level. Some progress has been made in terms of reducing the overall mortality rates for Wirral through the success of some specific intervention measures and, following positive feedback from a recent I&DeA Healthy Communities Peer Review, a health inequalities action

plan is being developed which will address Wirral Council's contribution to improving the underlying causes of poor health such as worklessness, educational attainment and aspiration.

NHS Wirral (formerly known as Wirral Primary Care Trust) and the Council have worked together to develop five lifestyle strategies to encourage people to make healthier choices. These strategies cover obesity, food and drink, physical activity, drinking safely and being smoke free and have all been integrated into an overarching health and wellbeing strategic framework under the direction of the borough's Joint Directors of Public Health.

Our innovative Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy aims to address the negative effects of alcohol use by tackling young people's alcohol misuse, developing alcohol related identification and treatment services and providing effective alcohol related crime and disorder reduction initiatives. Alcohol outreach services are also held within Wirral Council's one stop shops where reception workers have been trained to signpost people.

Wirral Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) brings together a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations concerned with the effects of drug and alcohol use in Wirral and continues to be recognised for its excellent performance. Wirral's Drug and Alcohol Action Team is responsible for ensuring that the targets identified in the National Drug Strategy are achieved locally and priorities for action in Wirral echo the four key aims of the National Drug Strategy. These are to prevent today's young people from becoming tomorrow's problematic substance users, reduce the availability of illegal drugs, reduce drug related crime and its effect on communities and provide fast and effective treatment.

A strategic framework for adult social care has also been developed, with refreshed joint commissioning strategies for older people and learning disability now in place. Engagement with stakeholders is also improving. For example, an Older People's Parliament has been set up in partnership with Wirral Senior Citizen's Forum, to give older people an opportunity to have their say on decisions that affect them.

The local authority is leading a drive to put power in the hands of the most vulnerable people through the use of individual budgets and direct payments. These two methods provide people with more choice about the services we deliver and how they access them. The development of individual budgets and self directed care will also provide individuals with greater choice and control over their employment, learning and social opportunities.

Much has already been done to help disabled and older people to live at home more safely and Wirral Council is working with Wirral Partnership Homes and NHS Wirral to develop this further, with the aims of reducing the numbers of people experiencing falls and assisting with hospital discharges. Following a successful pilot of the Smart House in Woodchurch, a technology-based service is being rolled out. To date over 200 people have had assistive technology equipment installed in their homes. Additionally, a Falls Prevention Service, funded through the Supporting People Programme, and supported by the Falls Prevention Modernisation Board, offers Home Safety Assessments and the provision of a minor repair service to mitigate risk.

Wirral's parks and open spaces are vitally important to delivering the quality of life outcomes we want for all our citizens, and much has already been done to link health and wellbeing strategies to this important asset.

New resources have been allocated to a cleaning scheme capable of responding flexibly outside normal hours, including weekends, to calls to remove glass and debris from children's play areas where particular problems of cleanliness and safety are identified during periods of high use. This scheme will be monitored and the results used to inform future service delivery.

Wirral's leisure centres, in partnership with the Amateur Swimming Association, have adopted the national plan for teaching swimming and have pioneered a new scheme which has seen older people accessing the borough's swimming pools for free. A free swimming programme for young people has already increased the use of pools by 65%.

Other initiatives include developing the *Books on Prescription* service that encourages more and better informed users to take greater responsibility for their own health. This is a joint project between NHS Wirral and Wirral Libraries. Council funding has also been identified for the *Get into Reading* project, matching that of NHS Wirral and the University of Liverpool, who run the scheme in association with Wirral Libraries. The scheme, which aims to improve the mental well being of people and build community spirit through shared reading, and which operates in libraries, community centres and day centres across Wirral, has already proved successful and attracted national attention for the benefits it brings to those who take part.

Health and well being partners include:

- Age Concern
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust
- Community and voluntary sector
- Government Office North West
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Merseytravel
- NHS Wirral
- Wirral's Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT)
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Wirral Council
- Wirral Information Resource for Equality and Disability (WIRED)
- Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

1.5 Life chances for Wirral's children and young people

Challenges

Most of Wirral's children and young people will fulfil the aspirations that we and their parents and carers have for them. They will be healthy, safe and well educated; have easy access to recreation, sport and leisure; be able to make a positive contribution to our society; and be well prepared for their working lives. Children

and young people do well in our schools. They are entitled to a place in a nursery or early years setting from the age of 3 and nearly all young children take advantage of this.

Attainment levels in primary schools are above the national average in writing and science for seven year olds and statistics for 11 year olds are above or inline with national averages in all subject areas. Roughly 70% of all pupils in Wirral attain five or more A*-C GCSE grades.

However, some children and young people in our borough do not fulfil their potential, with a clear link between deprivation and academic attainment. Despite overall attainment levels being above the national average, there are stark disparities in attainment between areas of the borough, with children in Birkenhead achieving a low level of A*-C grades at GCSE compared to those in West Wirral. Better outcomes for children and young people are invariably found in the more affluent areas. The GCSE attainment gap (for 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C) between free school meal pupils and non free school meals pupils in our maintained schools was just over 37% in 2008, higher than in the other Merseyside districts. The key challenge for us therefore is to bridge the Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) attainment gap in science, mathematics and English in schools in Wirral's deprived communities to ensure that the pupils involved have improved chances at GCSE level.

Children and young people in the more deprived areas of Wirral are also less healthy, less safe, and are more likely not to be able to find a job. They also have a much higher chance of becoming teenage parents and long-term outcomes for both the parent and child are poorer than average amongst teenage parents. Although the outcomes for Wirral children and young people taken as a whole exceed the expectations that we may have, given the levels of deprivation, the challenge for us is to eliminate those disparities in outcomes and ensure that all our young people have the best possible start in life.

Broadly, we think that of the 78,000 children in Wirral, 20% at any one time will have additional needs which require some kind of extra support. Most of these children will be living in the more disadvantaged areas. Within this 20%, about 2,000 children will have more complex needs and will require a much higher level of support; for example, if they have to be taken into care or are severely disabled.

Nearly 90% of 16 year olds stay on in school or college or go into employment. However the numbers of young people not engaged in education, employment and training (NEET) is an important challenge. Whilst significant progress has been made in reducing the number of young people 16-18 not in education, employment or training, the most deprived areas of the borough have been identified as having disproportionately higher levels of young people not in education employment or training, as well as specific cohorts including teenage mothers, care leavers and young offenders.

There are too many looked after children in the borough and they do not achieve as well as others, with only 15% achieving 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE in 2006. Reducing the number of looked after children must be achieved whilst ensuring that the safety of the children remains a paramount concern.

The teenage conception rate in Wirral remains lower than the North West regional average but higher than the national and Merseyside rates. Rates of teenage parenthood in Wirral continue to be highest in those areas that experience higher levels of deprivation and poorer educational attainment.

In 2007, the proportion of children who were classified as either overweight or obese was 25% of Reception Year children and 35% of Year Six children. As strategies to promote healthy lifestyles are effective and the proportion of children who are overweight or obese increase with age, we need to ensure we help families maintain a healthy weight from infancy to adulthood.

Moving in the right direction

Our children and young people's strategic plan, developed by Wirral's Children and Young People's Partnership, identifies need and appropriate action across the borough.

Wirral has responded well to the challenge of developing childcare to support parents into work or training, with the long term aim of helping to lift children out of poverty. We have seen growth in most sectors although the numbers of childminders operating in the borough are subject to some variation.

Wirral's children and young people have access to a range of extended services and activities which support and motivate them to achieve their full potential. Our children's centres are at the heart of this agenda. In primary school this means access to a varied menu of activities combined with childcare, if needed, and in secondary school these activities are offered alongside a safe place to be. The menu includes sport, arts and drama, recreational play, homework clubs and some academically focused activities for those who need extra tuition or more challenging opportunities for those most able. Activities can be on the school site or somewhere else in the locality and are available outside of school hours and during school holidays.

Schools are supported to identify children with additional needs, ensuring swift and easy access to a whole range of specialist services. Family learning sessions enable children to learn with their fathers and mothers. Information provided to parents through this service helps ensure a smooth transition into primary school and enables them to support their child moving on to secondary school.

School standards are high – most of our schools on inspection are classified as good or outstanding and children do consistently well at all Key Stages. Nearly 90% of our 16 year olds stay on in school or college or go into employment; over 45% of 18 year olds go to university. The Connexions Service gives good support in providing information, advice and guidance for all young people 13-19 (up to 25 for those with particular needs), and targeted services exist for young people who are vulnerable or not clear about their future.

Most children and young people are healthy. Children and young people are well supported by a community paediatric team, health visitors, school nurses and others.

Children and young people are generally safe and learn how to care for themselves. They make a positive contribution to life in Wirral. They take part in musical activities, games, sports and outdoor pursuits and are encouraged to take part in positive activities through youth and play provision. Many children and young people belong to clubs and societies where they can develop their interests and skills. Different activities enable children and young people to have fun and also learn about themselves and how they can make a difference to society. They achieve awards under the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and they volunteer in their local communities. Supported by their teachers, youth workers, Connexions Personal Advisors, the organisers of voluntary groups and many others, they grow up to be well-adjusted, active and responsible young people.

Just some of the projects and activities making a difference to children and young people's lives in Wirral are:

- Wirral's two dedicated *Smokefree* Officers, joined by smoking cessation youth workers, actively promoting an age of sale change across the borough using the health promotion trailer;
- An award winning scheme - *Kerbcraft: Crafty the Fox* - promoting road safety to schoolchildren;
- *Dig It* - a scheme initiated by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in response to community concerns about anti-social behaviour and complaints from youngsters about lack of things to do. The project has been developed in partnership with many agencies enabling young people to build a market garden and community kitchen which is used for healthy eating, food hygiene and cookery classes, using the produce they have grown themselves. This project also addresses other partnership agendas by providing diversionary activities for children, by encouraging healthier lifestyles and by bringing derelict land back into use;
- *Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)* – co-ordinated by the Connexions partnership to provide activities for children and young people between the ages of 8-19 yrs, particularly those at risk of social exclusion and community crime;
- A joint funding initiative providing a dedicated worker to promote and encourage leisure and cultural opportunities for looked after children;
- A programme providing holiday activities for children and young people in minority communities, delivered by the community and voluntary sector.

Partners in improving life chances for Wirral's children and young people:

- Community and voluntary sector
- Connexions
- NHS Wirral
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Merseyside Police
- Wirral Council

1.6 Wirral's living and working environment

Challenges

Our living and working environment in Wirral makes an important contribution to the quality of life of residents and to the borough's investment and tourism offer. As well as having parks and open spaces to be proud of, partners in Wirral want to ensure that all parts of the borough are places where people want to live and work.

Street cleanliness issues feature highly on surveys undertaken by the Council and cleanliness is frequently discussed at Area Forums across Wirral. It is clear that residents and businesses regard street cleanliness as extremely important to their quality of life. There is a clear link between deprivation and street cleanliness. Whilst significant progress is being made on overall cleansing standards and fly tipping removal across the borough, improvements - especially in more deprived areas of the borough - are often insufficient.

Recycling is a big issue for Wirral. Wirral was one of the worst authorities in the country in terms of performance on recycling - the percentage of household waste recycled in 2006/07 was only 9% with 5% of waste sent for composting. Wirral fell well short of its 20% combined target. To address this, a new environmental streetscene services contract for all waste and street cleaning has been put in place to deliver improvements in services.

Since the roll out of the grey recycling bins across Wirral, the recycling rates for the Borough have improved dramatically. Wirral has moved from one of the worst Council's in the Country for recycling to one of the most improved. We are currently reusing, recycling or composting over 39% of household waste which represents a massive improvement. 95% of properties are now on the grey bin scheme. Continued focus will be needed to ensure that we achieve the central government target of 40% by 2010.

Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill has an environmental and financial benefit. If Wirral residents do not minimise waste produced and recycle more, the council will have to pay significantly more in landfill taxes in coming years. This could divert money away from other priorities.

Climate change has the potential to impact on Wirral as we have a low-lying parts of the borough which may be liable to flooding. We have a rich biodiversity of habitats and wildlife species which may be affected as well as a landscape which is a major asset to Wirral in attracting tourism and boosting the economy – 80% of our coastline has international and national designations for its importance to wildlife. Partners recognise that planning for mitigation and adaptation in the future is essential to protect our environment.

Moving in the right direction

Wirral's performance borough wide has improved in recent years, with significant progress being made on overall cleansing standards and fly tipping removal across the borough.

A wide variety of projects have already made a significant, positive impact on Wirral's living and working environment. These include:

- A partnership of the Council and leading Registered Social Landlords, has co-ordinated investment in *Tranmere Together*. This is a neighbourhood management programme which has been implemented to enable the co-ordination and delivery of services in the local area. By providing a pro-active approach to issues such as fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour, these schemes can pioneer neighbourhood change, tackle low demand and reintroduce safety and pride into communities;
- *Bidston and North Birkenhead Environmental Action Group (BEANBAG)* - an award – winning community initiative which has co-ordinated action across all public sector organisations and enlisted many private sector partners to improve the quality of the environment in a deprived area of the borough. The group does this through education, litter-picks and fun days and is so successful that it is now delivering community based environmental projects on behalf of Wirral Partnership Homes.
- *Wirral Wildlife* – the local group of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust which protects and maintains Wirral's natural habitats and species, working closely with Wirral's Ranger Service, statutory agencies and the police. The Wirral Biodiversity Forum brings together agencies with conservation and interest groups.
- A network of Friends of Parks groups – the *Friends Forum* - which meets twice a year to share best practice in enhancing and improving local urban parks and open spaces;
- The voluntary *Wirral Environmental Network* organises community events and works with schools to promote more sustainable living. A waste topic group promotes waste reduction and recycling through education campaigns;
- *UGLI (Urban Green Land Initiative)* works with owners of derelict sites and the local community to proactively find a sustainable solution for the long term maintenance of the site;
- Wirral Council, Merseytravel and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have all signed up to the Nottingham Declaration, making commitments to reduce their impact on global climate change. Wirral Council has also set up a Sustainability Unit to co-ordinate the borough's actions towards reducing its carbon footprint;
- The Integrated Countryside and Environment Plan (ICEP) aims to provide an umbrella project encompassing improvements to rural businesses and the environment in Merseyside. Successful Wirral initiatives include Bidston Moss, where an ICEP Mersey Forest Grant has complemented other investment to transform an area of brownfield land six times the size of Wembley Stadium into community woodland.

As well as thematic approaches to addressing some of the issues around the environment, the partnership has signed up to living within environmental limits as one of its cross-cutting principles. This is supported by the establishment of an

Environment and Sustainability Advisory Group which as well as being a voice for environmental issues will help to enhance sustainable development in Wirral.

Partners in improving Wirral's living and working environment include:

- Beechwood and Ballantyne Management Committee
- Riverside Housing
- Tranmere Together
- Wirral Council
- Wirral Partnership Homes
- Wirral Environment Partnership
- Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management

1.7 Housing in Wirral

Challenges

Whilst Wirral's efforts with regards to achieving decent homes have been largely successful in the social rented sector in recent years, it is in the borough's private sector stock where problems are greater, particularly in those homes occupied by vulnerable households. Wirral has in the region of 30,000 private sector properties which were built before 1919 and a further 35,000 private sector properties built between 1919 and 1944. Many of these have very low energy efficiency ratings and contain greater numbers of households living in fuel poverty. Improving the quality of existing housing and providing new homes to replace ageing housing stock is an important focus for Wirral Council.

In the west of the borough, house prices exceed four times the borough average and in the lower valued east, prices have risen faster than incomes. This is reflected in an increase in expressions of interest in social rented properties through the Wirralhomes choice based lettings scheme. There is, as a consequence, a greater requirement for affordable homes both for social rent and shared ownership across the borough together with financial products being made available to assist lower income households to remain in, or access, owner occupied homes.

Following the endorsement of Wirral's Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Wirral is currently developing an Affordable Housing Policy which will fully detail the level of new affordable housing required to meet the Borough's planning policies for housing provision.

Although the economic downturn has led to a fall in house prices, historical increases in all areas of the borough means first time buyers are still struggling to access owner occupation. Key indications are that volumes of house sales are falling across the Borough as are prices; and an increase in the empty properties in the more vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Against national trends, the number of homeless applicants in Wirral has not fallen at the rate it has elsewhere and the level of intentional homeless acceptances is still at a high rate compared to other areas in the North West. The use of temporary accommodation rose considerably from December 2004 to March 2008 but has been on a rapid decline since then.

There is a higher proportion of households with special needs in Wirral than the national average, including people with a physical disability and the frail elderly. These groups are more likely to live in social rented accommodation and are three times more likely to be living in unsuitable housing. These factors present a challenge in the provision of adequate numbers of suitable properties as well as supporting residents to remain in their own homes.

Our partnership health and wellbeing agenda includes developing support for older people that will help them to live safely and, independently in their own homes. The challenge for housing partners therefore, is to develop innovative and complementary services, whilst remaining within limited resources.

The demand for Supported-Living Services on Wirral continues to grow, specifically for those vulnerable people who fall within the socially excluded groups. However, access to such services remains limited, due to the difficulty in obtaining move-on accommodation and the resultant 'bed-blocking'.

The current Supported and Special Needs Housing Strategy recognises the need to re-focus strategic priorities, in the following areas:

- The development of a single access point to services for older people, to enable them to remain in their own homes through the use of Assistive Technology, Adaptations and appropriate support;
- The reinvestment of funding in support services for people with a mild to moderate learning disability who do not receive a statutory service, through joint commissioning arrangements;
- The provision of short-term services for homeless people, substance mis-users, offenders, people with mental health problems, women fleeing domestic violence and young people at risk needs to be reconfigured to reflect the varying levels of need experienced by these client groups, with a greater focus on enabling access and move-on to appropriate independent accommodation within the community.

Moving in the right direction

Wirral's proactive approach to developing sustainable, appropriate housing in line with the North West Regional Housing Strategy is evidenced in a number of strategies and programmes of activity. Notable amongst these is the work of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative to provide a greater choice of type, tenure and value of property. The application of the limited housebuilding policy in the west of the borough is intended to assist the Housing Market Renewal Initiative by concentrating redevelopment on the eastern side of Wirral. Through the short and medium term renewal of housing markets, principally in the key urban areas of inner Wirral such as Tranmere and Rock Ferry, the tone will be set for the long term revival of Wirral's eastern waterfront neighbourhoods as places where people will choose to live in the years ahead, balancing out Wirral's housing market in the process. This is reinforced by the designation of parts of Liverpool and Wirral by the Government as the *Mersey Heartlands* Growth Point, which will lead to acceleration

in housing supply in east Wirral, particularly through the Wirral Waters scheme and Housing Market Renewal developments.

We are seeking to address the significant challenges for the housing market presented by the recession in a number of ways and are working actively with Government, regional and sub-regional partners. We will continue to progress our Housing Market Renewal Initiative, increase the work of the Empty Property Strategy Team, take part in the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme, restructure Re-housing Services to place a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness and work with Wirral's Registered Social Landlords on worklessness and financial inclusion.

The *Living Through Change* initiative encompasses a range of initiatives to support individuals and neighbourhoods undergoing significant change. This includes environmental management and security of high stress areas through installation of security equipment, crime reduction advice, personal alarms and CCTV. Following consultation, environmental improvements have been made to the Old Chester Road Corridor in Tranmere and a Homemovers Service and a Handyperson scheme have been implemented.

Wirral Council has started to address increasing the choice of housing options for older people through the provision of two *Extra Care* schemes, with a further two currently being taken forward for development. This is giving older people choice where sheltered housing is no longer appropriate but residential or care homes are currently the only other options available.

A recent review of homelessness services has formed the basis of a new Homeless Strategy and Action Plan that focuses on preventative measures, increased partnership working and the delivery of a comprehensive housing options service. A good example of preventative working is shown by Wirral Council becoming a 'fast track' local authority in December 2008 for the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Through the Supporting People programme, the local authority aims to improve the lives of vulnerable people in Wirral by increasing their opportunities for independence through the commissioning and delivery of quality, cost-effective and preventive, support services that meet strategic priorities. The Supporting People programme contracts with, monitors and reviews over 250 housing-related support services involving approximately 7,500 clients across the borough. Additionally, the Wirral Home Improvement Agency provides numerous services including the provision of a Handy Person Service, fast track adaptations to properties and the awarding of Disabled Facilities Grant to approximately 4,000 clients each year.

Much has already been done to deliver our aim of eradicating fuel poverty in Wirral including the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Strategy. The energy efficiency of housing is improving through initiatives offering heating and insulation improvements to vulnerable households. In addition, the Council works with the Energy Saving Trust advice centre to pro-actively target information to homes that have the greatest potential to cut their carbon dioxide emissions.

Housing partners in Wirral:

- Anti Social Behaviour Team
- 4NW
- Energy Projects Plus
- Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Merseyside Police
- Merseyside Probation Trust
- NHS Wirral
- Partnership for Racial Equality
- Private Developers
- Private Landlords
- Registered Social Landlords
- Support Providers
- Tranmere Alliance
- Tranmere Together
- Wirral Council
- Wirral Drug and Alcohol Team
- Wirral Home Improvement Agency
- Wirral Strategic Housing Partnership
- Wirral Voluntary and Community Sector Network

2. WIRRAL 2025 – VISION AND STRATEGY

2.1 Our Vision

Our vision is of a more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential.

Our goal to improve everyone's quality of life in Wirral is based firmly on local needs and community aspirations. The objectives in our community strategy have been, and will continue to be, informed by consultation with the people of Wirral. Consultation undertaken by the council in relation to the Local Development Framework (LDF) has also informed the partnership's vision and strategy for Wirral alongside visioning work undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership, including within the context of identifying Wirral's Local Area Agreement priorities for improvement.

In developing our Wirral 2025 vision and Local Area Agreement, partners have sought to balance the long-term needs of the borough with the key challenges at hand. The questions for all of us concerned with sustainable solutions for Wirral include:

- What distinctive roles should each of the partners in the borough play?
- How can public agencies and the voluntary and community sector work together to maximise improvements in the quality of life for local people?
- How can the challenges found in the more deprived areas of the borough relating to issues such as health and educational attainment be addressed?
- Where in Wirral should new development be focused to deliver maximum regeneration and economic benefits?
- How new housing should be distributed between Wirral's Housing Market Renewal / Regeneration Priority Areas and higher-demand areas?
- How can we maximise the unique opportunities presented by both the borough's docklands and the Port of Liverpool?
- On which transport corridors / routes should investment in sustainable transport be focused?
- How can we ensure access to services, employment, the borough's retail offer and leisure opportunities for all our residents?
- How can Wirral's natural and built environment and local distinctiveness be respected and enhanced?
- How can we address the uncertainties of global climate change?

We are planning ahead in partnership to ensure that the borough's infrastructure and services can meet future challenges. We also recognise our success as a

partnership is closely linked with that of our neighbours in the region and beyond. We know that in order to achieve our long-term vision, Wirral must have a strong local economy and play a more significant role in the city region economy. We want Wirral to be a thriving, metropolitan area playing a significant part in the sustainable growth of the Liverpool City Region. Wirral is already in a strong position to support the city region's success. Key projects include Wirral Waters, a £4.5 billion investment creating 27,000 new jobs; major new development on the waterfront at Woodside; the £65 million New Brighton scheme and the continued development of Wirral International Business Park that has already seen in excess of £150 million of investment.

We know that a strong local economy cannot deliver prosperity for all in Wirral without addressing other issues. For example, a strong local economy requires a well-educated workforce with the right skills. Sustainable growth and investment in Wirral is therefore underpinned by our ability to provide excellent life chances for children and young people. Our communities need to be safe and offer a suitable range of appropriate affordable housing and a clean and pleasant living and working environment. Equally, improving health and well being is essential to providing a workforce fit to support the economy. A strong local economy will help us to stabilise Wirral's population and rebalance the mix of age ranges in the borough.

Partners in Wirral also recognise the links between low levels of economic inactivity and other issues such as poor health and low educational attainment. That is why we are working together to develop strong, cohesive communities where people are able to access and enjoy increased prosperity and a better quality of life. We will narrow the gap between the poorest and most affluent of Wirral's people and ensure that all communities can play their full part in a sustainable future. Our ambition is to end deprivation. We will work to narrow the gap in education, employment, health and housing both within and between communities. We will give priority to raising the aspirations, opportunities and quality of life of our most vulnerable, disadvantaged or excluded citizens, wherever they might live.

We recognise that focusing on the disparities in the borough needs to be complemented by an approach which identifies and targets a number of priority groups across Wirral, including incapacity benefit claimants, lone parents, people from black and minority ethnic communities, low income households with children, people with low or no skills, Wirral's NEET (not in education, employment or training) cohort, the over 50s and women returners.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) provides the framework within which many of the strategic objectives set out in the Community Strategy will be addressed, specifically those relating to the use of land and buildings in the borough. The Local Development Framework is a series of documents, starting with a Core Strategy. Wirral 2025 reflects the emerging Core Strategy for Wirral, which is part of the Borough's statutory Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy will be subject to several stages of public and stakeholder consultation before final adoption, which is anticipated in 2010/11. The vision for Wirral as set out in the Core Strategy is that:

- Wirral's economy will be strengthened and diversified; there will be a wide range of employment sites and premises attractive to existing businesses and inward

investors. The borough will be an attractive location for higher quality, better paying employers, particularly those in the knowledge-based sector;

- The borough will be an attractive place to live through the promotion of sustainable, mixed communities and the provision of high quality, well designed, zero-carbon, affordable, mixed tenure housing;
- Birkenhead as the borough's sub-regional centre will have been enhanced and revitalised as the retail and service centre of choice for all the borough's residents, supported by a network of vital and viable district and local shopping centres;
- The major regeneration project at Wirral Waters will have successfully transformed surplus docklands in Birkenhead and Wallasey into vibrant thriving mixed communities with a substantial range of jobs and homes;
- The borough will have developed its potential as a tourism destination focusing on the quality of its natural environment, its built heritage and coastal resorts at New Brighton, West Kirby and Hoylake;
- The high levels of deprivation and social and health inequalities found in parts of eastern Wirral will have been significantly reduced;
- All new development will be suitably adapted to the potential impacts associated with climate change and flood risk whilst minimising its own carbon emissions and consumption of water and other resources. All new residential development will have been zero carbon from 2016 onwards;
- The borough will have maintained and enhanced a high quality built and natural environment, including a fully established network of green infrastructure in the urban area and a safeguarded and enhanced biodiversity and geodiversity resource;
- The quantity of waste generated in the borough will be reduced through greater levels of waste reduction, re-use and recycling and all waste generated will be managed and processed as close as possible to the borough;
- Transport and land use will be fully co-ordinated, maximising the use of sustainable transport modes, including bus, rail, walking and cycling with the number and length of individual car journeys minimised.

2.2 Our Strategy

We will plan and take action together to deliver:

- **A strong local economy** for Wirral;
- **Safer, stronger communities** in all parts of the borough
- The best possible **health and wellbeing** for all families and individuals

- Excellent **life chances for children and young people**
- A high quality **living and working environment**
- **Sustainable, appropriate housing** for all

We will also plan and take action together to ensure that the increased prosperity resulting from a strong local economy is accessible to all, and to narrow the gap between Wirral's most affluent and most deprived communities in relation to issues such as health, educational attainment and crime.

The medium-term delivery plan for addressing the key challenges identified in the strategy is Wirral's Local Area Agreement (Part B). This highlights the priorities the Local Strategic Partnership is focusing on for the next three years, along with information about how we will ensure these activities are sustainable in the longer term.

Our objectives will also be delivered through area planning and through key partner plans such as Wirral's Investment Strategy, the Council's Corporate Plan, the Local Transport Plan, and NHS Wirral's Strategic Commissioning Plan. Wirral 2025 also complements key regional and sub-regional plans such as the City Region Employment Strategy and emerging Regional Spatial Strategy.

Collaboration in Wirral is a recognised strength and there has been considerable progress in partnership working with a strong cross section of statutory and voluntary and community sector agencies. A robust and vibrant community and voluntary sector is critical to the delivery of Wirral 2025 and Wirral's Local Area Agreement and the sector is represented at all levels of the partnership. Partnership working has been significantly strengthened through the development and agreement of our vision for Wirral 2025 and the priorities for improvement identified in our Local Area Agreement.

To deliver our objectives, we need to **think big** for Wirral. To tackle Wirral's big challenges, we are committed to large scale change. Thinking big means:

- Focusing growth and investment on the east of the borough through the delivery of Wirral's Investment Strategy, at the heart of the city region, where social, economic and environmental challenges are most acute, regeneration and improvement are most needed and where the opportunities created will be most accessible to the greatest number of people;
- Working together to ensure that the regional and local transport infrastructure supports our plans for continued growth and investment;
- Developing the Birkenhead area as the borough's principal focus for retailing and services, complemented by a network of local centres providing modern facilities for day-to-day needs and community support. However, in terms of the borough's long-term economic future, there is a continuing challenge to make Birkenhead the retail destination of choice for all Wirral residents as opposed to

just those in the immediate catchment and the need to respond to competition from nearby Liverpool and Chester, and developments such as Cheshire Oaks;

- Expanding the scale and type of employment within Birkenhead and the A41 Corridor and redeveloping the vacant and under-used land within the dock estates to provide a step change in the mix, type and quality of business accommodation available;
- Maximising the strengths of West Wirral, including its reputation for high quality homes and environment as well as being an increasingly recognised destination for countryside and coast recreation and tourism, which will in turn support growth and regeneration in the east of the borough;
- Transforming our services, and looking at ways we can as partners collaborate to maximise our strengths;
 - Ensuring that the strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector in Wirral plays an increasingly key role in improving quality of life for all;
- Looking ahead to the challenges presented by an increasingly ageing population for services and the community;
- Involving everyone – including residents, businesses and schools - in our plans to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce Wirral's carbon footprint;
- Working together to tackle issues such as alcohol abuse which, if addressed, will have added value for the community;
- Making the main priority for homes the creation of sustainable and cohesive communities at the heart of the urban area, promoting housing market renewal and providing a greater mix in the size, type, tenure, quality and affordability of housing available, supported by a high quality environment and modern services including health and education.

A number of large scale regeneration projects are already underway which demonstrate that we are thinking big:

Wirral Waters

Birkenhead and Wallasey docks are the scene of huge transformation as Peel Holdings develop the concept of Wirral Waters – a £4.5 billion regeneration project to bring jobs and new homes to the docks, with views of the Liverpool Waterfront.

The project will take many years to complete but Peel has already started with a scheme to refurbish the Hydraulic Tower on the Four Bridges route which will provide a new hotel and restaurant. The Hydraulic Tower has been a local landmark for 150 years and has not been fully used for over 50 years. Its new use shows the potential for change in an area that has been overlooked for too long.

Plans for shops, offices and new-build residential developments are the next stage in the ambitious scheme. The plans are for the North Bank area of Birkenhead

docks as the company plans to build a new community around the already renovated warehouses at the docks. This is in line with the 2008 announcement that the Mersey Heartlands are a 'growth point', allowing significant numbers of new homes to be built in parts of Birkenhead and Liverpool.

Wirral Waters will play a key role in delivering the objectives of the sustainable community strategy and achieving the sustainable growth and diversification of the economy and communities of inner Wirral, through the following emerging objectives of the Wirral Waters Strategic Regeneration framework:

- Bringing housing growth to the inner area of Wirral in partnership through the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, complementing adjoining regeneration initiatives and catering for a range of housing needs;
- Stimulating the regeneration of the surrounding area through a planned approach to physical and social / economic integration and intervention;
- Innovating through new markets and placing Wirral on the global map, thereby positioning Wirral strongly to respond to wider economic influences in the 21st century;
- Providing a catalyst investment and working in partnership on training and skills programmes in local communities, to ensure that local people, particularly the long term workless, can access new employment opportunities;
- Bringing significant growth in the knowledge economy to the area, including major new offices for financial / professional services and the public sector, and with the potential to accommodate the office functions of a range of specialist sectors e.g. creative, research / science, environment, maritime;
- Securing a higher education facility for Wirral;
- Strengthening the economy of the area, including major new retail, leisure and cultural 'destinations' at both East Float and Bidston Dock, to complement and strengthen the existing offer in Birkenhead/Wallasey, capture spending leakage and act as a key attractor to future investors and residents;
- Expanding and strengthening the small and medium sized enterprise base of inner Wirral, through supply chain effects and positive knock on effects on local enterprise and innovation;
- Securing the future of the maritime sector in the area, including the relocation of port tenants from East Float to vacant and under-used land elsewhere in the port;
- Providing strategic and local connectivity to Wirral Waters, by rail, bus, ferry, walking / cycling and private vehicle, through a new 'city structure', including the delivery of a new 'city boulevard' and other key linkages, whilst opening up dockside access for all;

- Bringing investment in sustainable technologies and infrastructure, including energy, waste and water, promoting exemplar sustainability and stimulating the environmental sector in the wider area.

Newheartlands

The Merseyside Housing Market Renewal Initiative Pathfinder – Newheartlands, is a long term regeneration project, to tackle the causes and symptoms of housing market failure, vacancy and decline at the heart of the conurbation.

Since 2003, a £43 million programme has been delivered, involving targeted acquisition and clearance and large scale refurbishment. Current activity in Rock Ferry and Tranmere will be completed over the 2008-11 period culminating with the leveraging of £38 million private sector investment in new homes on the Fiveways estate and the £30 million redevelopment of Church Road. A key focus will also be to align the housing market renewal in Birkenhead with the long term intentions of the Wirral Waters scheme and ensure that HMR makes a full contribution to the local economy.

Woodside Waterfront Development

This major regeneration programme will include the redevelopment of the Woodside Waterfront in Birkenhead, opening up exciting opportunities along the riverside site which overlooks the historic Liverpool waterfront. It is envisaged that this will create an area comprising offices, restaurants and bars, pavement cafes and other leisure ventures on the waterfront. The programme will include over £250 million of private sector investment and the creation of over 1,000 new jobs.

Wirral Coastal Zone

One of Wirral's key assets is its countryside and coast. A strategic programme of investment has been developed to capitalise on this which is made up of a number of key projects along the Wirral coastline:

- Building on the success of the Open Championship in 2006 through the creation of a world class golf resort in Hoylake;
- A £60 million regeneration scheme is currently underway in New Brighton to re-invigorate this seaside resort and restore it to its former glory, with the redeveloped Floral Pavilion now a flagship for the borough;
- A Masterplan for West Kirby and Hoylake, with proposals to improve economic prospects for existing businesses and encouraging private sector investment.

Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership is committed to maximising Wirral's potential as a place where people want to live, work and invest. The partnership is further committed to ensuring the approaches developed for addressing Wirral's challenges take into account the needs of all sectors of the broader community, promote fairness, accessibility and inclusion, and result in lasting improvements.

3. PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Wirral's regeneration plans are undoubtedly ambitious. The challenge for partners in the borough is to balance the need to safeguard and enhance the quality of its environment, while at the same time meeting the needs of increasing community expectations, modern living and providing a modern and sustainable location in which to do business.

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

We are committed to ensuring the approaches developed for addressing Wirral's challenges take into account the needs of all sectors of the broader community, promote fairness, value for money, accessibility and inclusion, and result in lasting, sustainable improvements.

As a partnership, we have therefore adopted the following cross-cutting principles to support our collaborative efforts to achieve sustainable solutions in Wirral:

- **Living within environmental limits**, for example in recognising the importance of climate change;
- **Working towards a strong, cohesive and fair Wirral**, where all communities and individuals feel valued;
- **Engaging communities**, in shaping services and identifying and being part of local solutions;
- **Ensuring that our services are accessible**, working together to develop collaborative approaches to delivering services and working with transport partners and others to promote connectivity;
- **Delivering value for money**, both in our partnership solutions and in the services we provide as individual organisations.

3.1 Living within environmental limits

Wirral's Strategic Partnership is committed to maximising Wirral's potential as a place where people want to live, work and invest and Wirral 2025 reflects this by including a delivery theme about Wirral's living and working environment. We know, however, that the challenges presented by climate change and other environmental issues mean that we must take a broader view to ensure that we can engage and act appropriately at all levels of the borough. As a partnership, we are committed to the promotion of more sustainable development, waste minimisation, recycling, renewable energy, energy and water conservation and eco-homes.

Wirral Council and other partners have signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and the local authority hosts a cross-agency working group to deliver actions across Wirral to reduce the impacts of climate change. The

improvement target in Wirral's Local Area Agreement to reduce CO₂ emissions will also help to ensure that sustainability is high on our shared agenda.

A key concern for the partnership is balancing our economic strategy with environmental and social considerations. We understand that this is not an easy task. We understand the risks of over development to localities and want to avoid the loss of local character and distinctiveness which is so important to Wirral residents, for example through converting and re-using existing buildings. We also know that increased economic prosperity may result in increased levels of car ownership, which is still low in parts of the borough. Whilst the majority of Wirral's residential areas are within 400 metres of a bus stop or railway station, there is still a high dependency on the car for journeys to work. Traffic levels already have an impact on communities along the busiest routes, particularly along routes to and from the motorway and Birkenhead. The implications for congestion and long-term air quality are potentially negative, so partners need to work together to put in place measures to ensure that the impact is as low as possible, for example through encouraging greener transport options.

A Environment and Sustainability Advisory Group (ESAG) has been set up to further review the themes and priorities in Wirral 2025 and our Local Area Agreement to ensure that we are tackling the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of our actions. The group has already undertaken a sustainability impact assessment of the improvement targets identified in Wirral's Local Area Agreement.

Key issues identified through this work include:

- As the borough increases its levels of recycling, more facilities may be needed to deal with material – what are the potential negative impacts of this, and how can we deal with them in partnership;;
- How to fully integrate climate change as a strategic issue for all partners;
- How to ensure that air quality in the borough is not compromised by increased traffic resulting from the higher levels of economic prosperity which we are aiming to achieve in Wirral.

The Environment and Sustainability Advisory Group will maintain strong links with other forums addressing the sustainability agenda, including the Climate Change Strategy Group.

3.2 Building a strong, cohesive and fair society

Community cohesion is a local and national priority. Since the disturbances of 2001 and the acts of a small group of extremists in London in July 2005 there has been increased focus upon addressing this area. The development of community cohesion is the attempt to build communities with four key characteristics:

- A common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- The valuing of diversity;
- Similar life opportunities for all; and
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in the school and within neighbourhoods.

Building a cohesive Wirral around these characteristics means recognising diverse needs and taking action to tackle inequality. We want the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances to be appreciated and positively valued, and for positive relationships to be developed between people from different backgrounds. Wirral's Strategic Partnership will take an advisory role regarding the emerging community cohesion agenda (including National Indicator 35).

All public bodies have a legal duty to respond to race, disability and gender issues with regard to the services they provide and the employment of staff. In order to work through the legal duty, organisations have to engage fully with the following key areas of work: policy development and review, consultation, training, responding to emerging legislation, and engagement with the third sector. A common framework for engaging with the agenda is to use the six strands model:

- Age
- Disability
- Faith / Religion
- Gender
- Race
- Sexual Orientation

Wirral's Strategic Partnership has adopted this framework for the purposes of developing an approach to ensuring that all public bodies we have a consistent and uniform pattern of working across the borough. A Wirral Equalities Forum (WEF) has been established which will ensure that we and our partners are promoting the same core values in relation to the six strands of equality across all of the services we deliver and in our roles as employers. There is a great deal of work now underway by partners and community groups, creating a firm foundation for future partnership work. We are now in a position to take advantage of the current level of activity and move the equality and diversity agenda to another level. The Wirral Equalities Forum provides a delivery mechanism to ensure that we continue to work together and play a supporting role for the third sector and will, for example, work with Wirral's Black Racial Minority Partnership (WBRMP) on a wide range of issues such as monitoring and reviewing race equality schemes and establishing recruitment and selection best practice in partner organisations.

3.3 Engaging communities

A clear directive for local areas has been set out in the Communities in Control White Paper to recognise and support representative and participatory democracy. It is about providing ways to pass power to local communities and citizens, giving them real control over local decisions. Community involvement is a crucial factor in ensuring the success of Wirral 2025 and our Local Area Agreement.

We want to ensure that the views of Wirral's residents are sought and used to shape the delivery of services. Well-established mechanisms such as the borough's area forums provide residents with opportunities to influence local services and partnership plans. Recent successes include:

- The Hospital Trust joining the Area Forums as panel members to enhance partnership working through the forums with effect from October 2007;

- NHS Wirral contributing £55k per annum through the Area Forums to fund projects and initiatives designed to improve the health and wellbeing of Wirral residents.
- Annual conferences to celebrate the success of our Area Forums, and discuss how to better to engage with our communities.

In addition to the Area Forums, Wirral also has an established Youth Forum and Youth Parliament to enable young people to have their say in shaping services. In 2007, an Older People's Parliament was established which gives older people an opportunity to have their say on council decisions that affect their lives.

Wirral traditionally has had a strong ethos of voluntary and community work which has been carried out through a range of agencies. One of the strategic aims for Wirral's Strategic Partnership is to further explore joint community engagement activities with the third sector through the development of a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy. Wirral's Strategic Partnership will take an advisory role regarding to National Indicator 7 (environment for a thriving third sector).

The role of Wirral's Compact and its codes are seen as an important element in this process. The Compact and its codes form the basis of the partnership with the voluntary and community sector, setting out the rules for engagement between local public sector bodies. These codes, written and agreed at a local level, will provide the baseline from which all community engagement activities will be measured.

3.4 Ensuring that our services are accessible

Transport and access to employment opportunities and services both within and outside the borough are critical to tackling inequality.

Wirral, along with the other Merseyside authorities of Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens, Liverpool and Halton, works in partnership on transport and accessibility issues across the sub-region. The Merseyside Local Transport Plan (LTP) Partnership has recently been awarded Beacon status for *Improving Accessibility*, largely for its work on identifying areas of deprivation or particular need and the development of projects to address this need.

Over the next 10 years, Merseytravel will be completing an ambitious programme of improvement and development works to provide a single, integrated public transport network accessible to all, as well as helping to tackle climate change by reducing car dependent lifestyles. Working with partners and stakeholders, Merseytravel is committed to promoting walking, cycling and public transport use to improve quality of life in the Liverpool European city region and beyond.

LTP 3 is due to be launched in 2011 with vital strategic direction for the future of Wirral and the region's transport and accessibility issues. This document will be informed by the objectives in Wirral 2025, and in turn will inform future reviews of the strategy.

3.5 Delivering value for money

Working smarter and making the best use of our resources is especially critical in the current climate. Public services face huge challenges if they are to deliver the improvements that users expect. As we move further into the 21st century, there is an ever widening gap between the way we have traditionally provided services and what the public expect.

We are committed to delivering value for money as a partnership, both through the joint commissioning of services, and individually through the actions that we take to work better and smarter within our individual organisations.

4. DELIVERING WIRRAL 2025

Wirral 2025 is a long term vision demonstrating how the statutory agencies, the private sector and the community and voluntary and community sector work collectively to improve the quality of life within Wirral. It sets the scene for partnership working in the borough for the years to come and will play a key role in meeting the borough's future challenges, by linking together key local authority and partner strategies and driving short and medium term prioritisation through Wirral's Local Area Agreement and area planning.

Our delivery themes for Wirral 2025 are:

- **A strong local economy** for Wirral;
- **Safer, stronger communities** in all parts of the borough
- The best possible **health and wellbeing** for all families and individuals
- Excellent **life chances for children and young people**
- A high quality **living and working environment**
- **Sustainable, appropriate housing** for all

Three key drivers will make improved outcomes in relation to these themes a reality. These are:

- **Wirral's Local Area Agreement**
- **Key plans and strategies** within each thematic area (these are identified in 3.1 onwards)
- **Area planning** to identify how the aims of Wirral 2025 can be progressed locally

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is an annually refreshed contract between central government and local partners setting out 3 year improvement targets. This contract is essentially the medium-term delivery plan for our Sustainable Community Strategy and should therefore be viewed alongside this strategy (see Part C). Priorities are included in Wirral's Local Area Agreement on the basis of the following principles:

- Is it a problem for Wirral or a part of Wirral?
- Is it in need of improvement?
- Does it need partnership working to achieve it?
- Does the evidence base exist to prove the above?

A comprehensive governance structure (see diagram p.37) is now in place for partnership working in Wirral. It has been designed to aid effective delivery of Wirral 2025 and our Local Area Agreement and ensure that there is accountability at all levels.

Wirral's **Strategic Partnership Assembly** has wide representation from all sectors and has a consultative function to ensure that there are a full set of views on how Wirral's Strategic Partnership can take forward the priorities for Wirral, as well as being a forum for sharing best practice. The Partnership Assembly also has an important role of co-ordinating engagement across the sectors.

The Wirral **Strategic Partnership Executive** (previously the LAA Programme Board) is the senior decision making board for Wirral's strategic partnership with overall responsibility for the delivery of Wirral 2025 and our Local Area Agreement. The Executive's role is to work collaboratively to ensure the delivery of the objectives and targets contained in Wirral 2025 and the Local Area Agreement and to remove any barriers or blockages to successful delivery. The Executive will also be responsible for maximising Wirral's performance within the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) framework. Representation on Wirral's Strategic Partnership Executive is drawn from Wirral Council, NHS Wirral, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, JobCentrePlus, Learning and Skills Council, the private sector, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Merseyside Police, the community and voluntary sector and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

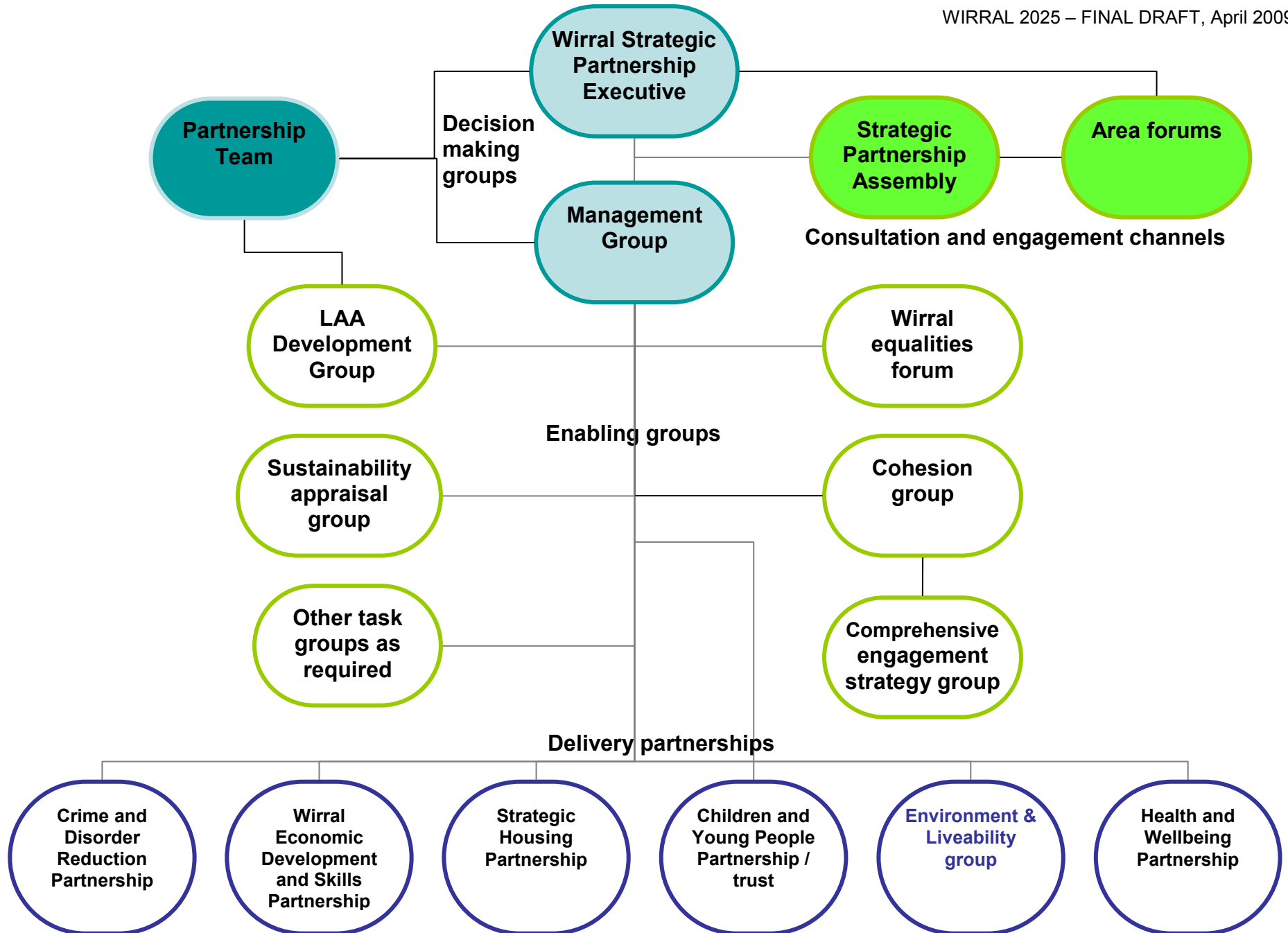
Six thematic partnerships – one for each of Wirral 2025's six delivery areas - lead on our Local Area Agreement improvement priorities and related targets by managing the performance and risks through robust delivery plans.

These thematic partnerships are:

- **Crime and Disorder Reduction:** led by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- **Children and Young People** (to become Children's Trust): led by the Children and Young People's Executive Board
- **Health, Care and Wellbeing:** led by the Health and Wellbeing Partnership
- **Strategic Housing:** led by the Strategic Housing Partnership Board
- **Environment and Liveability:** currently led by the liveability group
- **Economic Development and Skills:** led by the Wirral Economic Development and Skills Partnership group.

The **Partnership Management Group** is responsible for overall management of delivery plans, for responding to the ongoing assessment of local needs and priorities and providing leadership and direction to the **enabling groups** supporting the partnership. These enabling groups, such as the Wirral Equalities Forum and the Environmental and Sustainability Advisory Group, advise the partnership to ensure that issues such as equality and diversity, sustainability and community cohesion are integrated into every level of planning and delivery. These groups will be critical in identifying ways that the partnership can demonstrate its shared principle through real action.

Wirral's Area Forums are also an important part of our delivery and governance arrangements, ensuring that views and actions at local level are fed into strategic priorities and plans. Each Area Forum has its own area plan which identifies how strategic priorities are being translated into local action. It is through the delivery of the Wirral's Local Area Agreement and the review of our local area plans that we will further develop our understanding of people and places in Wirral.



4.1 A strong local economy

A **strong local economy** is fundamental to our vision for a more prosperous Wirral. We want Wirral to be a thriving, prosperous, metropolitan area contributing to growth at the heart of the Liverpool City Region. We want to expand the number and type of jobs, to increase opportunities for income growth and wealth creation for local people and reduce the numbers of people commuting outside of the borough for work. The economic downturn makes these aspirations far more challenging to achieve, however we remain committed to focusing growth and investment on the east of the borough, where social, economic and environmental problems such as long-term worklessness are most acute, and where the opportunities created will be most accessible to the greatest number of people. We also want to retain the spending of Wirral residents within the borough to ensure that increased prosperity has a positive impact on the borough's living and working environment – our high quality cultural offer will be integral to this, including the authority's tourism and coastal strategies. We are also committed to playing a full part in the emerging multi area agreement around the economy.

Wirral's Local Area Agreement improvement targets will also help to deliver the local authority's enterprise and full employment plans. These plans focus on a number of areas and groups, such as lone parents, over 50s, people from minority ethnic communities and areas with rates of worklessness over 25%.

Measures of success in Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008-11:

- **National Indicator 151** - overall employment rate
- **National Indicator 153** - working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods
- **National Indicator 171** - new business registration rate
- **Local indicator** - total amount of land developed for employment use
- **Local indicator** - NVQ level2 skills participation

Key plans and strategies:

- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Regional Economic Strategy
- Wirral Council's Corporate Plan
- Wirral's Enterprise Strategy
- Wirral's Full Employment Strategy
- Wirral's Investment Strategy
- Wirral's Local Development Framework
- Wirral's Tourism Strategy

4.2 Safer, stronger communities

Wirral has made significant progress in creating **safer communities**, with crime and the fear of crime continuing to fall across the borough. Wirral has the lowest rate of recorded crime in Merseyside and levels of burglary, violent crime, robberies and vehicle crime are amongst the lowest in the country. We want to keep improving because we know that crime is still a high priority for local people. We also want to make sure that people and businesses in the more deprived areas of Wirral do not continue to experience disproportionately high levels of crime and disorder. Tackling anti-social behaviour is a high priority for partners, and we will continue to work together to address related issues such as alcohol and improved services for the borough's young people. Another area of focus will be reducing the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system by continuing to reduce overall levels of crime.

Measures of success in Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008-11:

- **National Indicator 15** - serious violent crime rate
- **National Indicator 20** - assault with injury crime rate
- **National Indicator 38** - drug-related (Class A) offending rate
- **National Indicator 47** - people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents
- **National Indicator 111** - first time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17
- **Local Indicator** – reducing the number of incidents of ASB
- **National Indicator 21** – people who agree that the police and local councils are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in their area (perception measure)

Key plans and strategies:

- Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy
- Wirral Council's Corporate Plan

4.3 Health and wellbeing

Wirral has a rich history of partnership working to deliver improvements in the borough's **health and well-being**. We want to continue to build on this foundation to tackle the serious issues of continuing health inequalities and an ageing population. In Wirral, those in our most affluent areas live on average over 10 years longer than those in the most deprived areas. We want to focus on activities which address those things which have an impact on life expectancy, including alcohol-related disorders, smoking and cardio vascular disease. We also want to offer improved support for people to make better lifestyle choices. We will work hard to address the challenges of developing services in line with Wirral's ageing population and the expectations of people who rightly want to remain independent for as long as possible and to have choice in how they access services. This will have significant implications for the way social care is delivered in the borough.

Measures of success in Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008-11:

- **National Indicator 39** - alcohol harm related hospital admission rates;
- **National Indicator 120** - all-age all cause mortality rate;
- **National Indicator 123** - stopping smoking;
- **National Indicator 130** - Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support (Direct payments and Individual Budgets)
- **National Indicator 135** - Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information
- **Local indicator** - clients aged 16-35 with two or more episodes of self-harm in the last 12 months who subsequently become engaged in meaningful social activities
- **Local indicator** - people supported to live independently through social services (all adults)
- **Local indicator** - to reduce the number of people with dementia admitted to residential and nursing care 5% reduction on 2007/8 admittances
- **Local indicator** - the number of emergency unscheduled acute hospital bed days occupied by people aged 75 or more in NHS hospitals in Wirral who are admitted through fractured neck of femur as a result of a fall

Key plans and strategies:

- Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy
- NHS Wirral Strategic Commissioning Strategy
- Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
- Wirral Council's Corporate Plan
- Wirral Hospital NHS Trust Integrated Business Plan 2007-12

4.4 Life chances for children and young people

Life chances for children and young people in Wirral are overall very good. Most of our children and young people will fulfil the aspirations that they, we and their parents and carers have for them. They will be healthy, safe and well educated, have easy access to recreation, sport and leisure, be able to make a positive contribution to society and be well prepared for their working lives. However, while Wirral on the whole is a positive place for children and young people to grow up, some children and young people do not fulfil their potential. The high levels of poverty and deprivation in some parts of the borough undoubtedly have an impact upon children's lives and their development. Partners in Wirral want to reduce outcome gaps between children from poorer backgrounds and the population as a whole to that ensure that all of our young people have the best possible start in life.

Measures of success in Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008-11:

- **National Indicator 48** - children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents
- **National Indicator 55** - obesity among primary school age children in Reception Year
- **National Indicator 68** - referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment
- **National Indicator 112** - under 18 conception rate
- **National Indicator 117** -16-18yr olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- + set statutory indicators for attainment and early years
- **Local Indicator** - safely reducing the number of looked after children
- **Local Indicator** - young people's participation in activities

Key plans and strategies:

- Children and Young People's Strategic Plan
- Wirral Council's Corporate Plan

4.5 Living and working environment

Wirral's **living and working environment** is hugely important to increasing investment and prosperity, as well as having a real impact on local people's quality of life. Wirral has a culture and heritage to be proud of and it is important to our sense of identity that we retain and promote these aspects of life that impact on our living environment. We have made improvements to our environment but we are committed to doing more. Waste and recycling, street cleanliness, highway maintenance, the quality of our parks and open spaces and safety on our roads are all issues that rightly matter to local people and we recognise that all partners in Wirral can contribute to making improvements in these areas. We want a cleaner, greener Wirral for all, and we will therefore work to tackle the disparities in cleanliness standards affecting some of our more deprived areas. Another key area of focus will be on reducing the CO2 emissions per capita across the borough, and partnership working around the CRed system will be a valuable tool in achieving this target.

Measures of success in Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008-11:

- **National Indicator 167** - congestion- average journey time per mile during the morning peak
- **National Indicator 186** - per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the local authority area
- **National Indicator 192** - household waste recycled and composted
- **National Indicator 195** - improved street and environmental cleanliness
- **Local Indicator** – improved street and environmental cleanliness – levels of litter and detritus in Wirral's most deprived areas

Key plans and strategies:

- Climate Change Strategy
- Joint Merseyside Waste Strategy
- Local Transport Plan (LTP3)
- Wirral Council's Corporate Plan

4.6 Sustainable, appropriate housing

Delivering **sustainable, appropriate housing** is a challenge for all stakeholders in Wirral. We want the main priority for homes to be the creation of sustainable communities at the heart of the urban area, promoting housing market renewal and providing a greater mix in the size, type, tenure, quality and affordability of housing available, supported by a high quality environment and modern services including health and education. We also want everyone to live in a decent home. Decent housing is essential so that everyone experiences social cohesion, health, well-being and independence. Vulnerable households, which are defined as having family members on means tested or disability related benefit, are statistically more likely to live in a non-decent home compared to other households.

Measures of success in Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008-11:

- **National Indicator 154** - net additional homes provided
- **National Indicator 155** - number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
- **National Indicator 156** - number of households living in temporary accommodation
- **Local Indicator** - number of vulnerable households assisted with at least one main energy efficiency measure under Warm Front

Key plans and strategies:

- Empty Property Strategy
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- Regional Housing Strategy
- Wirral Affordable Warmth Strategy
- Wirral Council's Corporate Plan

Wirral council is committed to making information accessible to everyone. You can visit your local one stop shop or telephone our call centre on (0151) 606 2020 for support and advice if you need information translated or in another format such as large print, Braille or audio.

<p>مجلس ویرال Wirral ملتزم بامكانية توفير المعلومات ليتمكن الحصول عليها بواسطة كل فرد. يمكنك الذهاب الى وحدة الخدمات المتعددة او اتصل تلفونياً على مركزنا للاتصالات على الرقم (0151) 606 2020 للمساعدة والنصح إذا ترغب في المعلومات مترجمة او في شكل آخر كالكتابة بخطوط كبيرة، بكتابة بريل او شريط كاسيت.</p> <p>(Arabic)</p>
<p>উইরাল কাউন্সিল সকলের কাছে তথ্য পৌছে দেওয়ার জন্য দায়বদ্ধ। আপনি আমাদের ওয়ান-স্টপ-শপে ভিজিট করতে পারেন বা আমাদের কল সেন্টারে (0151) 606 2020 –এই নম্বরে সাহায্য ও পরামর্শের জন্য ফোন করতে পারেন যদি আপনি তথ্য অনুবাদিত, অন্য ফরম্যাটে, বড়ো হরফে ছাপায় বা ব্রেইল লিপিতে পেতে চান।</p> <p>(Bengali)</p>
<p>偉盧鎮議會致力為所有人士提供資訊。如果您需要某些資料翻譯成其他語文或編制成其他模式的版本（如大字體、凸字或錄音帶），您可以到就近的「一站店」或致電「傳訊中心」（0151606 2020）查詢。</p> <p>(Chinese)</p>
<p>Tá Comhairle Wirral tiomanta le heolas a chur ar fail do gach duine. Is féidir leat cuairt a thabhairt ar an ionad ilfhreastail is áitiúla duit nó glaoch a chur ar an lárionad glaonna s'againn ar (0151) 606 2020 chun tacaíocht agus comhairle a fháil má tá eolas de dhíth ort aistrithe nó i bhfoirm éigin eile, mar shampla, cló mór, Braille nó closmheáin.</p> <p>(Gaelic)</p>
<p>विरल कौंसिल, सभी लोगों के लिए जानकारी को पहुंचयोग बनाने के लिए वचनबद्ध है। यदि आपको किसी जानकारी के हिन्दी में अनुवाद की या किसी और रूप में जैसे कि बड़े अक्षरों में छपाई, बरेल में या कैस्ट के रूप में अवाश्यकता हो तो सलाह और मदद प्राप्त करने के लिए आप अपनी स्थानीय वॉन स्टाप शाप में जा सकते हैं या इस नम्बर पर (०१५१) ६०६ २०२० पर हमारे किसी भी एक काल सेंटर में टैलीफोन कर सकते हैं।</p> <p>(Hindi)</p>
<p>Rada Miejska Wirral stara się, aby informacje były dostępne dla wszystkich. Mogą Państwo odwiedzić miejscowy ośrodek informacyjny (one stop shop) lub zadzwonić do naszego biura obsługi klienta pod numer telefonu (0151) 606 2020 po wsparcie i porady, jeśli informacje wymagane są w innym języku lub formacie, np dużym drukiem, w wersji audio lub w alfabecie Braille'a.</p> <p>(Polish)</p>
<p>ਵਿਰਲ ਕੌਂਸਲ ਸਾਰਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਪਹੁੰਚਯੋਗ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਵਚਨਬੱਧ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਤਰਜਮੇ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਛਪਾਈ, ਬਰੇਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਕੈਸਿਟ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਲਾਹ ਅਤੇ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਥਾਨਿਕ ਵੌਨ ਸਟਾਪ ਸ਼ੌਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ ਜਾਂ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ (0151) 606 2020 ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਕਾਲ ਸੈਂਟਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ।</p> <p>(Punjabi)</p>
<p>Gollaha Wirral waxa uu isku xil-saarey in uu wargelinta ka yeelo wax uu qof walba heli karo. Waxa aad booqan kartaa Dukaanka Hal-Mar-Joogsiga ah ee xaafadaada ama sooba wac xarruuntayada soo wicitaanka oo laga helo (0151) 606 2020 si aad tageero iyo la tallin uga hesho haddii aad u baahan tahay in wargelinta luqad kale loogu turjumo ama looga soo dhigo qaab kale sida far waaweyn, farta ee Braille ama cajallad maqal ah.</p> <p>(Somali)</p>
<p>ویرال کونسل معلومات کو ہر ایک کیلئے قابل رسائی بنانے کیلئے پابند عہد ہے۔ اگر آپ کو معلومات ترجمہ شدہ یا کسی دیگر شکل جیسے بڑے حروف، بریل یا آڈیو کی شکل میں مطلوب ہو تو آپ مدد اور مشورے کیلئے اپنے مقامی ون اسٹاپ شاپ پر آسکتے ہیں یا ہمارے کال سنٹر کو (0151) 606 2020 پر فون کریں۔</p> <p>(Urdu)</p>

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**WIRRAL'S
PARTNERSHIP
AGREEMENT
2008/9 to 2010/11**

**Submission to Communities and
Local Government**

**Agreed 31 May 2008
(Refreshed 26th March 2009)**

This document outlines the context and detail of Wirral's 2nd local area agreement, in line with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

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Foreword from Councillor Steve Foulkes

Chair of Wirral's local area agreement programme board

We have developed our local area agreement at the same time as developing and consulting on Wirral's sustainable community strategy. Wirral's local area agreement is intended to provide a clear sense of what Wirral is like as a place to live, work and visit. The document also captures our future ambition for the borough through a vision that is shared by Wirral's strategic partnership and forms the basis of our new local area agreement.

Wirral is fortunate to have good partnership working with a strong cross section of statutory and voluntary and community sector agencies. This partnership working has been significantly strengthened through the development and agreement of our vision for Wirral and priorities for improvement. We now have a common understanding of the big challenges in Wirral, and partners from all agencies have contributed significantly to the development of our local area agreement.

Wirral developed this local area agreement prior to the economic slowdown. The improvement targets within this document were already challenging and ambitious at the time of the original submission, however in recent months the impact of the economic downturn has started to emerge and we have entered into a recession making the achievement of many of the local area agreement improvement targets far more challenging. We will keep focussed on achieving these targets and we are introducing a wide range of measures to minimise the impact of the economic downturn in Wirral's communities. Wirral remains committed as a partnership to tackling these challenges.

As a partnership, the challenge now is to deliver these improvement targets and I look forward to the partnership making a real difference to Wirral and its communities.

Steve Foulkes

The Wirral Story:

Wirral is a borough of enormous opportunity but it also a place of sharp contrasts, with the overall picture masking stark inequalities for local people. The borough has some of the most affluent wards in the country and some that rate amongst the most deprived. Many of Wirral's citizens enjoy an excellent quality of life, with good quality housing, schools, employment opportunities and living environment. However, in Wirral's more deprived areas, which are mostly located on the east side of the borough, the lives of our citizens can be very different. These areas are characterised by pockets of high unemployment, low skills levels, poorer quality housing, unacceptable levels of anti-social behaviour and high levels of ill health.

Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership is committed to maximising Wirral's potential as a place where people want to live, work and invest. The partnership is also committed to tackling inequality. We have made progress since our first partnership strategy – *Getter Better Together* – was launched, but we want and need to do much more. The partnership is further committed to ensuring the approaches developed for solving Wirral's problems take into account the needs of all sectors of the broader community, promote fairness, accessibility and inclusion, and result in lasting improvements.

Our long term, partnership vision is:

A more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential

We know that in order to achieve this long-term vision, Wirral must play a more significant role in the city region economy, boost its overall economic vitality and tackle the significant inequalities that exist within health, housing, education, environment and crime. We must also plan ahead to ensure that the borough's infrastructure and services can meet future challenges such as an increasingly ageing population and maximise any opportunities they may bring.

We also need to build on our assets: a beautiful coastline, excellent housing in parts of the borough, an abundance of high quality green spaces, a well educated and skilled workforce, and a great track record in inward investment, overall educational attainment, leisure and cultural opportunities and low levels of crime and disorder.

Our vision for a more prosperous and more equal Wirral is underpinned by six delivery themes:

- Strong local economy
- Safer communities
- Health and wellbeing
- Living and working environment

- Life chances for children and young people
- Sustainable, appropriate housing

How we selected our priorities for improvement:

In order to achieve the vision outlined above, the LAA focuses on the main priorities for improvement facing the borough. These are the big challenges that need to be tackled.

The priorities for improvement were developed through a robust process, using a needs analysis to identify broad improvement areas. Each of the block / thematic partnerships developed a long list of potential improvement areas. These were reviewed through the LAA development group. The local area agreement programme board then received a business case for each area. The partnership performance team analysed these cases and rated them with a traffic light system against the four key principles for inclusion. These principles, agreed by the board are:

- Is it a problem for Wirral or a part of Wirral?
- Is it in need of improvement?
- Does it need partnership working to achieve it?
- Does the evidence base exist to prove the above?

These business cases were challenged in a series of 'dragon's den' sessions involving key partners, including representatives from Government Office for the North West, against these criteria. Once these sessions were complete, block leads were tasked with identifying the best indicators to measure progress against the improvement areas and negotiating the improvement targets. The board received regular updates on progress and presentations on additional target areas suggested by GONW.

Delivering our vision:

A **strong local economy** is fundamental to our vision for a more prosperous Wirral. We want Wirral to be a thriving, prosperous, metropolitan area contributing to growth at the heart of the Liverpool City Region. We want to expand the number and type of jobs, to increase opportunities for income growth and wealth creation for local people and reduce the numbers of people commuting outside of the borough for work. The economic downturn makes these aspirations far more challenging to achieve, however we remain committed to focussing growth and investment on the east of the borough, where social, economic and environmental problems such as long-term worklessness are most acute, and where the opportunities created will be most accessible to the greatest number of people. We also want to retain the spending of Wirral residents within the borough to ensure that increased prosperity has a positive impact on the borough's living and working environment – our high quality cultural offer will be integral to this, including the authority's tourism and coastal strategies. We are also committed to playing a full part in the emerging multi area agreement around the economy.

The improvement targets will help to deliver the local authority's enterprise and full employment plans. These plans focus on a number of areas and groups, such as lone parents, over 50s, people from minority ethnic communities and areas with rates of worklessness over 25%.

Improvement areas: worklessness, skills for employment, business start-ups

Connections to other targets: NEET, employment land and premises, CO2 emissions, congestion

Wirral has made significant progress in creating **safer communities**, with crime and the fear of crime continuing to fall across the borough. Wirral has the lowest rate of recorded crime in Merseyside and levels of burglary, violent crime, robberies and vehicle crime are amongst the lowest in the country. We want to keep improving because we know that crime is still a high priority for local people. We also want to make sure that people and businesses in the more deprived areas of Wirral do not continue to experience disproportionately high levels of crime and disorder. Tackling anti-social behaviour is a high priority for partners, and we will continue to work together to address related issues such as alcohol and improved services for the borough's young people. Another area of focus will be reducing the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system by continuing to reduce overall levels of crime.

Improvement areas: violent crime, assault, antisocial behaviour, drug-related offending, adult and child traffic accidents

Connections to other targets: first time entrants to the youth justice system, alcohol harm admissions, positive activities for young people

Wirral has a rich history of partnership working to deliver improvements in the borough's **health and well-being**. We want to continue to build on this foundation to tackle the serious issues of continuing health inequalities and an ageing population. In Wirral, those in our most affluent areas live on average over 10 years longer than those in the most deprived areas. We want to focus on activities which address those things which have an impact on life expectancy, including alcohol-related disorders, smoking and cardio vascular disease. We also want to offer improved support for people to make better lifestyle choices. We will work hard to address the challenges of developing services in line with Wirral's ageing population and the expectations of people who rightly want to remain independent for as long as possible and to have choice in how they access services. This will have significant implications for the way social care is delivered in the borough.

Improvement areas: life expectancy, independence / people helped to live at home, dementia, mental health, falls, alcohol harm admissions, smoking cessation, carers

Connections to other targets: child and adult traffic accidents, teenage conceptions, childhood obesity

Wirral's **living and working environment** is hugely important to increasing investment and prosperity, as well as having a real impact on local people's quality of life. Wirral has a culture and heritage to be proud of and it is important to our sense of identity that we retain and promote these aspects of life that impact on our living environment. We have made improvements to our environment but we are committed to doing more. Waste and recycling, street cleanliness, highway maintenance, the quality of our parks and open spaces and safety on our roads are all issues that rightly matter to local people and we recognise that all partners in Wirral can contribute to making improvements in these areas. We want a cleaner, greener Wirral for all, and we will therefore work to tackle the disparities in cleanliness standards affecting some of our more deprived areas. Another key area of focus will be on reducing the CO2 emissions per capita across the borough, and partnership working around the CRed system will be a valuable tool in achieving this target.

Improvement areas: employment land and premises, environmental cleanliness, recycling and waste minimisation, CO2 emissions,

Connections to other targets: worklessness, business start-ups, antisocial behaviour, violent crime, congestion

Life chances for children and young people in Wirral are overall very good. Most of our children and young people will fulfil the aspirations that they, we and their parents and carers have for them. They will be healthy, safe and well educated, have easy access to recreation, sport and leisure, be able to make a positive contribution to society and be well prepared for their working lives. However, while Wirral on the whole is a positive place for children and young people to grow up, some children and young people do not fulfil their potential. The high levels of poverty and deprivation in some parts of the borough undoubtedly have an impact upon children's lives and their development. Partners in Wirral want to reduce outcome gaps between children from poorer backgrounds and the population as a whole to that ensure that all of our young people have the best possible start in life.

Improvement areas: child social care referrals, NEET, DCSF statutory indicators, first time entrants to the youth justice system, childhood obesity, teenage conceptions / sexual health, looked after children

Connections to other areas: worklessness, life expectancy, antisocial behaviour

Delivering **sustainable, appropriate housing** is a challenge for all stakeholders in Wirral. We want the main priority for homes to be the creation of sustainable communities at the heart of the urban area, promoting housing market renewal and providing a greater mix in the size, type, tenure, quality and affordability of housing available, supported by a high quality environment and modern services including health and education. We also want everyone to live in a decent home. Decent housing is essential so that everyone experiences social cohesion, health, well-being and independence. Vulnerable households, which are defined as having family members on means tested or disability related benefit, are statistically more likely to live in a non-decent home compared to other households.

Improvement areas: Homelessness, decent homes for vulnerable people, net new homes built

Connections to other targets: congestion, CO2 emissions, all age, all cause mortality rates, worklessness, educational attainment

Supporting the vision:

The six themes above demonstrate how we will achieve our vision of a more prosperous and equal Wirral. To make these ambitions a reality, we need to ensure that all the supporting mechanisms are in place and effective. This includes: voluntary and community sector support, sustainability and equality appraisals, performance management and cross-cutting themes. The LAA programme board is supported by several groups working on these themes.

These include:

- Wirral Equalities Forum
Environment & Sustainability Advisory Group
- LAA Development Group
- Research Group

The community and voluntary sector plays a key role in the development, management and delivery of the local area agreement. As well as being represented at all levels of the partnership, the sector's infrastructure is in a phase of development, including implementation of the compact agreement and the coalescence of the individual councils for voluntary service into a new organisation: Voluntary and Community Action for Wirral (VCAW). VCAW and the Network will provide the first point of engagement with the voluntary and community sector, ensuring the voices of local people and community groups can be included in the partnership.

Conclusion:

We will begin to tackle the key challenges facing Wirral will be through the delivery of our partnership agreement. This is a 3 year action plan which has been negotiated with central government to deliver improvements on Wirral's shared priorities. Wirral's LSP has identified, through a robust prioritisation process, the right improvement targets for 2008-11.

WIRRAL LAA 2008 – 2011 (Refresh): Improvement Targets

NI	National Indicators (Designated targets)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
15	Serious violent crime rate	Recorded Assault with Less Serious Injury rate per 1,000 population in 2008/09 (based on mid-2007 population estimates) – to be finalised in 2009. Please note the 2010/11 figure will be calculated using mid-2009 population estimates".	Introduced in 2009/10	-3.5%	-3.5% ⁷	Wirral Council Merseyside Police Youth Offending Service
20	Assault with injury crime rate	Recorded Assault with Less Serious Injury rate per 1,000 population in 2008/09 (based on mid-2007 population estimates) – to be finalised in 2009. Please note the 2010/11 figure will be calculated using mid-2009 population estimates".	Introduced in 2009/10	-2%	-2% ⁸	Wirral Council Merseyside Police Youth Offending Service
38	Drug-related (Class A) offending rate ⁵	Out-turn for Jan-Mar 2008 cohort. Final data available July 2009. Emerging baseline: 1.06	Introduced in 2009/10	Average 10.5% below baseline across 09/10 and 10/11 cohorts ⁶		Wirral Council Merseyside Police Wirral PCT, DAAT Wirral Probation Service

NI	National Indicators (Designated targets)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
39	Alcohol-harm related hospital admission rates	2196 (2006/07)	2581	2762	2908	Wirral PCT DAAT Wirral Hospital Trust
47	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents	174 (2005-07)	154 (11.3%)	138 (10.4%)	123 (11.1%)	Highways Agency Wirral Council Merseyside Police Merseyside Fire & Rescue
48	Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accident	31 (2005-07)	26 (16.3%)	22 (15.6%)	20 (6.2%)	Highways Agency Wirral Council Merseyside Police Merseyside Fire & Rescue
55	Obesity among primary school age children in Reception Year	9.1% (2006/07)	9.23%	9.37%	9.5%	Wirral PCT Wirral Council
68	Referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment	40.5% (2006/07)	71%	72%	75%	Wirral Council
111	First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17	1600 (rate/100,000) (Baseline 527-2007/08)	Introduced in 2009/10	1570	1500	Wirral Council Youth Justice Board Police
112	Under 18 conception rate	-7% (2006)	-28%	-39%	-50%	Wirral PCT Wirral Council Wirral Hospital Trust

NI	National Indicators (Designated targets)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
117	16 to 18 olds who are not in education, employment and training (NEET)	9.5% 2007/08	7.40% ² (current reward target)	7.10%	6.90% ¹	Connexions Wirral Council
120	All-age all cause mortality rate	815 (2006) Male	735	714	694	Wirral PCT Wirral Council
		529 (2006) Female	513	500	488	Wirral PCT Wirral Council
123	Stopping smoking	896 (Baseline based on average 2004-07)	896	896	896	Wirral PCT Wirral Council Wirral Hospital Trust
130	Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support (Direct Payments and Individual Budgets)	4.9%	Introduced methodology change in 2009/10	15%	30%	Wirral Council
135	Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information	15.5% (May 2008)	18%	21.5%	25%	Wirral Council
151	Overall employment rate ³ (WNF Reward indicator)	69.8% (June 2007)	70.5% (0.7%)	71.2% (0.7%)	72.1% ¹ (0.9%)	Wirral Council Job centre plus
153	Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods ⁴ (WNF Reward indicator)	35.8% (May 07)	35.2% (-0.6%)	34.4% (-1.4%)	33.3% ¹ (-2.5%) ⁴	Wirral Council Job centre plus Learning and Skills Council

NI	National Indicators (Designated targets)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
154	Net additional homes provided	330 (04/05-06/07)	500	500	500 ¹	Wirral Council
155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	99 (04/05-06/07)	149	167	187 ¹	Wirral Council, Local RSLs, Developers, Housing Corporation, New Heartlands
156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	8 (Dec 2004)	18	12	4	Rehousing Services, RSLs Supporting People
167	Congestion - average journey time per mile during the morning peak	4.12 min. sec/mile	4.3% (4.23 min. sec/mile)	4.7% (4.24 min. sec/mile)	5.1% (4.25 min. sec/mile)	Wirral Council, Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority / Executive, Merseytravel, Other Merseyside councils
171	New business registration rate	40.9 (2007)	Introduced in 2009/10	40.3	42 ¹	Wirral Council NWDA Private sector
186	Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the Local Authority area	6 tonnes CO2 per capita (2005)	3.7%	7.5%	11.4%	Wirral Council Enworks ESTAC
192	Household waste recycled and composted	14.2% (2006/07)	34%	35.5%	37%	Wirral Council Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority

NI	National Indicators (Designated targets)	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
195	Improved street and environmental cleanliness – Litter (Primary)	11% (2007/08)	8%	7.5%	7%	Wirral Council Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority
	Improved street and environmental cleanliness – Detritus (Secondary)	11% (2007/08)	10%	9%	8%	
	Improved street and environmental cleanliness – Graffiti	7% (2007/08)	Conditional to show no deterioration from baseline figure			
	Improved street and environmental cleanliness – Fly posting	1% (2007/08)	Conditional to show no deterioration from baseline figure			

¹ Targets will be reviewed at 2009/10 refresh

² Re the previously agreed reward element on NEET, NI 117, the counting methodology adopted at the time of the agreement will be used to measure reward performance only

³ Please note that this data has a 95% confidence interval of +/- 3.1%

⁴ Target is cumulative for the three year LAA

⁵ The LAA target will be completely met if the average of Year 2 and Year 3 ratios is at least 10.5% below the final baseline ratio (available July 2009)

⁶ These targets set out to achieve a reduction of 7% per annum in the baseline rate of class A drug related offending

⁷ A 7% a reduction as cumulative total for 09/10 and 10/11

⁸ A 4% a reduction as cumulative total for 09/10 and 10/11

Set Statutory Indicators for attainment and early years

NI	New National Indicators	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
72	Achievement of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least 6 in each of the scales in Personal Social and Emotional Development, Language Communication, Language and Literacy	46.1%	54.0%	56.0%	57.0%	Wirral Council
73	Achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2 (Threshold)	72.0%	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	77.0%	78%	Wirral Council
75	Achievement of 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (Threshold)	48.4	52.0	55.2	57.0	Wirral Council
87	Secondary school persistent absence rate	7.1	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	6.4	5.5	Wirral Council

NI	New National Indicators	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
92	Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest	34.3	31.5	30.2	28.9	Wirral Council
93	Progression by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2	78.9	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	86.0	87.0	Wirral Council
94	Progression by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2	72.3	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	79.0	82.0	Wirral Council
99	Children in care reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	41.3%	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	44.0%	53.1%	Wirral Council
100	Children in care reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2	51.7%	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	44.0%	56.3%	Wirral Council

NI	New National Indicators	Baseline	LAA Improvement Target			Partners
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
101	Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths)	7.9%	Set on an academic year basis for 2009/10	7.4%	6.3%	Wirral Council

Local Indicators

Local indicators	Baseline	Improvement Target:			Partners
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Reducing the number of incidents of ASB	18414 (2007/08)	17917	17558	17207	Wirral Council Merseyside Police Youth Offending Service
Safely reducing the number of looked after children	606 (Feb 2006)	590	590	565	Wirral Council Wirral PCT Wirral Hospital Trust Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust
Young peoples participation in activities	20% (2007/08)	20%	21%	22%	Wirral Council
Clients aged 16-35 with two or more episodes of self harm in the last 12 months who subsequently become engaged in meaningful social activities	0 (2008)	2	2	2	Wirral Council Wirral Hospital Trust Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust Wirral PCT
People supported to live independently through social services (all adults)	2142 (2007/08)	2,185.8	2,230.05	2,274.3	Wirral Council Wirral Hospital Trust Wirral PCT
To reduce the number of people with dementia admitted to residential and nursing care 5% reduction on 2007/08 admittances	180 (2007/08)	171	162	154	Wirral Council Wirral PCT Wirral Hospital Trust Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust
The number of emergency unscheduled acute hospital bed days occupied by people aged 75 or more in NHS hospitals in Wirral who are admitted through fractured neck of femur as a result of a fall, as measured by PCT data	2185 (2007/08)	Introduced in 2009/10	3255	2975	Wirral PCT Wirral Council Wirral Hospital Trust

Local indicators	Baseline	Improvement Target:			Partners
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Total amount of land developed for employment use	16,598 (2007/08 - reported in December 2008)	Introduced in 2009/10	16,100	16,300	Wirral Council NWDA Private sector
NVQ level 2 skills participation	3250 (2006/07)	3283	3299	3316	Wirral Council Learning & Skills Council
No. of vulnerable households assisted with at least one main energy efficiency measure under Warm Front	2665 (2006/07)	2765	2903	3048	Wirral Council, EAGA plc, Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre,
Improved street and environmental cleanliness – levels of litter and detritus in Wirral's most deprived areas	30% (2007/08)	28%	24%	20%	Wirral Council Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority
(NI 21) People who agree that the police and local councils are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in their area	Agreed for inclusion by LAA Programme Board at its meeting – 20 th January 2009 in principle subject to further discussion regarding target setting.				Wirral Council Merseyside Police

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE /DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

WORKING WIRRAL – ALLOCATION OF THE REMAINING UNALLOCATED WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks approval to allocate the remaining Working Neighbourhoods Funding of £13,812,312 to the three priorities of Working Wirral to meet the objectives of the Council's Investment Strategy and to support Wirral people and businesses in a time of economic challenge.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Cabinet on 13 March 2008 (Item 26 Minute 553 refers) agreed that the Working Wirral resources (including Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF), Deprived Areas Fund and the European Social Fund's Complementary Strand) should be used to commission activity to deliver the Investment Strategy priorities of tackling worklessness, improving skills levels and increasing enterprise, business growth and investment. It was further agreed that the commissioning process would be overseen by Wirral's Economic Development and Skills (WEDS) Partnership in respect of employment and skills, with the Investment Strategy Board advising on the priorities for investment and business growth.

2.2 Wirral had been originally allocated £28,267,778 of WNF from 2008 – 2011 through the Area Based Grant. However, only the first year's allocation was confirmed by Government. This was due to an error that had been made in the original calculation on how the funding should be allocated nationally across the local authorities. The Government has now announced the outcome of the consultation that has taken place on their proposals for revising the allocation criteria and how it will be applied for 2009/10. The revised criteria will mean that Wirral will receive an increased allocation.

2009/10 Original allocation: £9,841,046 Confirmed revised allocation £9,879,492
2010/11 Original allocation: £10,238,708 Expected revised allocation £10,344,843

2.3 The Government announcement of 24th February 2009 confirmed the 2009-2010 allocation of WNF at £9,879,492.

2.4 The first round of Working Wirral commissioning identified that a maximum of £5 million would be available to allocate to activity to increase employment, skills levels and enterprise that can take place up to 31st March 2011. As reported to Cabinet on the 23 July (Item 11 Minute 149 refers) a further £1.67 million of resources were allocated to Wirral through the ESF Complementary Strand making a maximum of £6.67 million available for Round 1 activity.

2.5 Cabinet on 15 January (Item 11 Minute 334 refers) agreed that consultants should be appointed to further develop the Investment Framework to enable targeted commissioning of the Working Wirral programme to be taken forward to deliver activity against the three priority areas set out in the Investment Framework (Competitive Wirral People, Competitive Wirral Places and Competitive Wirral Businesses) and it also

considers the implications of the economic downturn. This work has now been completed and is reported below.

3.0 **PROPOSAL FOR THE ALLOCATION OF THE REMAINING WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND (WNF)**

3.1 In a report to Cabinet on March 19, 2009 I outlined the impacts of the current recession on Wirral's economy and set out some of the initial steps being taken by the Council to assist businesses affected by the current economic challenge.

3.2 Building upon this, Regeneris Consulting have looked in detail at how the remaining unallocated WNF, which totals £13,812,382, can be invested over the next two financial years (2009/10 and 2010/11) to support the objective of the Investment Strategy and assist Wirral's economy in a time of challenge and opportunity.

3.3 Regeneris Consulting have identified three key issues for the Council to consider. These are as follows:

- *Competitive Businesses*

The recession is impacting on Wirral businesses with a number of closures and unemployment rising. Many of the businesses that are continuing to trade are finding it difficult to access finance and retain quality staff. Working Wirral funding has already been approved to support a major grant scheme for local businesses and to buy in additional support from Business Link Wirral.

Regeneris Consulting advise that more support is needed not only to ensure the survival of businesses but also to allow them to move forward when the economy begins an upturn. They have identified the need for further businesses support, funding to support innovation, technology and investment in high speed broadband infrastructure as key areas for investment.

- *Competitive Places*

Whilst there is a focus on existing businesses in these challenging economic times, there also has to be investment made now for the future. Regeneris highlight that Wirral needs to invest in creating quality spaces and places where new businesses can be established and then thrive.

Investment is primarily required in creating well serviced sites with excellent access and the provision of enterprise centres where new companies can grow. Regeneris therefore propose that some of the Working Wirral funding should be used for gap funding of projects such as an Enterprise Centre, the assembly of land and the supply of power and digital technologies to those sites to encourage indigenous business investment and inward investment.

- *Competitive People*

Regeneris acknowledge that a number of partners are providing a number of initiatives to support local people into employment. In addition to this, they have identified two specific projects, the Construction Employment Integrator project and an apprenticeship project based on a model operating in Knowsley, which they believe will support local people from deprived communities in accessing and sustaining employment.

3.4 With these considerations in mind and recognising that significant investment has already been made in Priority 1 Competitive Wirral People, Regeneris recommend that the majority of the remaining unallocated WNF should be focussed on Priority 2 (Competitive Wirral Places) in order to create the conditions for growth by unlocking

major physical investments necessary to underpin the longer term developments of a local successful economy and on Priority 3 (Competitive Wirral Businesses) in order to boost competitiveness through support for businesses and entrepreneurs.

3.5 Regeneris have identified the following financial amounts by priority and key areas for investment as shown in the table below.

Recommended allocations of the remaining Working Neighbourhoods Funding and the key areas for investment

PRIORITY	PRIORITY 1 Competitive Wirral People	PRIORITY 2 Competitive Wirral Places	PRIORITY 3 Competitive Wirral Businesses
Financial Allocation:	£2.7m	£6.6m	£3.7m
Key Areas for investment with funding where known:	Construction Employment Integrator Apprenticeships	High spend Broadband infrastructure Power supply to key development Gap Funding / Land Assembly	Business Support Innovation, technology and research and development Promotion of Wirral businesses

3.6 Within these areas, there are some projects which have already been identified and the funding required is known. These projects are the Construction Employment Integrator and the Apprenticeship Programme. (A detailed report on the Integrator will come to cabinet in May and the Apprenticeship Programme is reported elsewhere on this agenda) .However, there are other areas where further work is required to identify the project and costs.

3.7 The investment of the remaining unallocated Working Neighbourhoods Fund will be insufficient to meet all the work required to meet the objectives of the Investment Strategy and Officers will continue to work strenuously with external funding partners (such as the North West Development Agency, Homes and Communities Agency and others) to bring in the investment required to support Wirral people and businesses.

3.8 The areas for investment of the remaining unallocated WNF were raised in a presentation on Working Wirral given to the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on March 18, 2009 (Minute 35 refers) and that Committee supported investment in these areas.

4.0 WORKING WIRRAL - COMMISSIONING

Employer Engagement

4.1 On the 10th December 2008 (Minute 305 refers), Cabinet approved Working Wirral money to enable Wirral Council to match fund European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources for employer engagement activity. The amount requested was £441,324 to be matched with ERDF for a total project cost £882,647. Due to a number of problems with a Merseyside composite bid for the ERDF resources from measure 4.2 of the North West Operational Programme, there has been a delay receiving approval for

the application. This is down to a number of activities in the composite application that have been designated ineligible for ERDF. However, the employer engagement element is still an eligible activity and it is envisaged that the issues will be resolved with the North West Development Agency (NWDA) as soon as possible. However, certain employer engagement activities are dependent on this project, including the use business advocates, to be employed through Business Link North West, to support the BIG Business Grant process that was approved by Cabinet on 19th March (Minute 393 -1).

- 4.2 Given the importance of these activities at a time of economic downturn Cabinet are asked to approve an extra £400,000 of Working Wirral money to allow Officers to implement the Employer Engagement activities identified as part of the ERDF bid, including engaging Wirral businesses to access SME grant support. This approval is based on the understanding that the money will be re-invested in the Working Wirral programme if the Wirral element of the 4.2 Employer Engagement ERDF bid is approved by the North West Development Agency.

Apprenticeship Programme

- 4.3 The Wirral apprenticeship programme, which is reported elsewhere on this agenda requires a total £1.7m of Working Wirral support over the next two years.

Business Support

- 4.4 On the 19th March, Cabinet approved Working Wirral funding for the BIG Business Grant programme (Minute 393-1) which includes advice on financial planning issues as part of the support programme to businesses affected by the current recession. Approved funding for this programme includes £800,000 per year from Working Wirral and a £50,000 allocation as part of the 2009/10 budget. Cabinet are asked to approve an amendment to the current contract for Enterprise Solutions, who deliver the Wirralbiz New Business Start programme, to enable them to facilitate the financial planning support. It will not require any additional resource, as Working Wirral money has already been approved. This arrangement will only be in place up to the end of June 2009 in line with the contract for new business starts. This financial planning element could also feature in any new contract for future business support services.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Wirral has been allocated £28.4 million of Working Neighbourhoods Fund resources (subject to confirmation for 2010/11). The allocation is paid through the LAA's Area Based Grant.
- 5.2 The sums of Working Wirral money indicated within this report are dependant on receipt of the level of Working Neighbourhood Funding indicated for 2010/11

6.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none arising from this report.

7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The implementation of Working Wirral will reflect the Council's commitment to equal opportunities.

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Projects proposed to be funded through Working Wirral are likely to have positive community safety benefits.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Working Wirral will have significant future benefits for this area.

12.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Working Wirral will have significant future benefits for this area.

13.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 This report will be of interest to all Members of the Council.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 The Working Neighbourhoods Fund Statement – DCLG and DWP Paper November 2007

Sub National Review of Economic Development – Report to Cabinet 6.09.07

Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 – DCLG December 2007

Area Based Grant 2008/09 to 2010/11 – Report to Cabinet 10.01.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 23.01.08

European Social Fund Complementary Strand – Report to Cabinet 07.02.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 13.03.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 09.07.08

European Social Fund Complementary Strand – Report to Cabinet 23.07.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 04.09.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 16.10.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 10.12.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 15.01.09

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 19.03.09

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 That the proposal to allocate the remaining Working Neighbourhood Funding as set out in this report be approved, including the following commissioned activities:

(i) That £400,000 of Working Wirral money is made available to support the allocation previously approved for drawing down ERDF measure 4.2 monies from the North West Operational Programme. This additional resource will be re-invested in the Working Wirral programme if the Merseyside bid is approved.

(ii) The Wirral apprenticeship programme, reported to Cabinet in a separate agenda item, is allocated a total of £1.7m of Working Wirral support over the next two years.

- (iii) Cabinet are also asked to approve an amendment to the current contract for the Wirralbiz New Business Start programme, to enable the contractor to provide financial planning advice as part of the BIG Business support programme that has already approved been by Cabinet. This arrangement will run until the end of June.

Jim Wilkie
Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23rd APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

Summary and Response to the RS2010 Regional Strategy for England's North West: Principles and Issues Paper

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the RS2010 Regional Strategy for England's North West: Principles and Issues Paper presented for consultation by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and the Regional Leaders Forum 4NW. A proposed Wirral Council consultation response is attached at Annex A. Members are asked to support the response and authorise officers to participate as appropriate in the development of the Regional Strategy on behalf of Wirral Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 'Prosperous Places: Taking forward the Review of Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR), The Government Response to Public Consultation' the Government confirmed its intention to legislate to establish a new regional strategy to replace the existing spatial and economic strategies. The Government believes that the regional strategy should set the framework for the activities, plans and investment decisions of the RDA, the Homes and Communities Agency and other public bodies in the region along with local authorities and other regional partners in order to ensure sustainable economic development. It should set out which places and sectors should be priorities for development and investment providing clarity and incentivising private sector investment in a region.
- 2.2 The regional strategy for the North West is being developed in four broad stages by the NWDA and 4NW on behalf of the region. Work has been underway throughout 2008 to develop the evidence base for the Principles and Issues Paper released in February 2009. The Principles and Issues Paper sets out the challenges and opportunities facing the region and is subject to an open consultation until 30th April 2009. Subsequently, a draft strategy will be prepared over the summer and be subject to consultation toward the end of 2009 with the aim of agreeing a strategy in mid 2010. Throughout this time, further evidence will be gathered to shape and support the strategy.
- 2.3 The initial Regional Strategy will be a high level strategic document, which will not seek to replicate national policy. The aim will be to produce a concise and succinct document which broadly covers:
- an overview of the key regional challenges;
 - how sustainable economic growth can best be delivered;
 - a distribution of increased housing supply figures consistent with the Government's long term housing supply, affordability and quality targets;
 - how the region will tackle climate change;
 - areas within the region identified as priorities for regeneration, investment and intervention;
 - strategic requirements and provision for transport, waste, water, minerals, culture, energy and environmental infrastructure.

3. Key Consultation Areas

3.1 Set consultation questions are presented in the Principles and Issues Paper under a number of theme headings. The detail of the Paper is summarised below by heading area.

Introduction and Context

3.2 The Paper sets the context for exploring the principles and issues of developing a strategy for a future fundamentally changed due to the recession, issues of climate change, low carbon economy, competing land pressures and the nature of future growth:

- The Northwest region has made significant progress in the last 20 years. Skills levels have risen and overall prosperity has increased. But important challenges remain such as ill health, worklessness, productivity, and social inclusion.
- As part of the world economy the region has the opportunity of rapidly emerging markets in Brazil, Russia, India and China. It also faces the global challenges of ever scarcer natural resources including food and energy security, improving sustainable consumption and production patterns, and adapting to climate change.
- There will be many lessons to learn from this recession, as well as dealing with the aftermath of it and identifying the nature of future growth. The future is very uncertain, with the likelihood of rapid technological and social changes, which themselves could drive growth.
- There will be increasing, and sometimes competing, land-use pressures on the countryside, urban fringe, open spaces and brownfield land. Climate change may be the single most important issue facing the region, country and world at this time, so developing a low carbon economy will therefore be essential to delivering sustainable growth and remaining competitive.

3.3 The Paper suggests that these issues mean that fundamental questions need to be asked about how our economy and society work, with a need to be radical in considering how we can integrate environmental, economic and social issues to achieve economic prosperity without unsustainable use of resources. For example, future models of growth may rely less on consumerism and credit and be based on more efficient use of natural resources.

3.4 Despite being in a global economy some of these pressures on resources could lead to increasing "localism" with stronger clustering of activities, increased home working and increased focus on local communities. The Paper promotes the need to understand how we can develop alternative models and measures of growth that reflect the importance of quality of life, culture and quality of experiences.

Assumptions

3.5 A number of major issues which will affect our society and environment in the years ahead are assumed in the paper:

- The Northwest is likely to become increasingly integrated into the European and wider world economy (which is potentially good for the region) and will need to compete harder to generate sustainable economic growth.
- The imperative for the region to compete on quality, rather than just price, will increase, at the same time as the need for the region to differentiate what it does.

- Climate change is happening and will fundamentally affect the way we live our lives and run our businesses. We will have to innovate in order to adapt and find solutions, not least to deliver against a Government target of 80% carbon reductions by 2050.
- Gas and Oil prices are likely to increase in the long term, and display increasing volatility. There will be issues surrounding availability of supply - prompting a need and incentive to reduce consumption, increase efficiency of use and develop alternative and local sources of energy.
- Some natural resources will become scarcer and this may lead to fluctuations in food & commodity prices – to counteract this we will need to manage natural resources sustainably and reduce consumption. These natural resources, including air, water, soils, landscapes and bio-diversity provide services which both directly and indirectly benefit the region, its economy and its communities.
- People will still need to commute and travel round, and in/out of, the region (not necessarily by car) for work and leisure. Work/life balance and ICT, new technology and digital infrastructure will become increasingly important though and will continue to influence the way in which we live and work.
- Cities/large towns will remain a major focus for living (residential development), economic activity and growth. Pressure on the green belt and ageing infrastructure services will increase.
- There will be an ageing population, declining cohort of school leavers and lower levels of inward migration unless we specifically set out to attract talent. However there is an expected growth in intermediate and higher level occupations. We will therefore need to make better use of our existing population by valuing equality and diversity, up-skilling and releasing the potential of the whole workforce. People will have to work longer to accumulate a pension. Older people will have higher expectations and contributions to make. The region will become more ethnically diverse.

Strategy Development Aims and Goals

3.6 It is proposed that the strategy will detail a set of objective principles against which future investment decisions are made. A set of potential aims and goals are presented:

- Good levels of health;
- Affordable, appropriate, good quality, well designed, energy efficient housing;
- High standards of education available both for children and adults and training which enables people to participate in society and in work;
- A broad range, depth and attractive choice of quality employment opportunities, which reflect and recognise everyone's potential and inspire and enable ambition to be realised;
- Excellent sustainable connectivity within and to/from the region;
- Sustained and sustainable consumption, production, economic growth and investment;
- High levels of productivity, investment and enterprise, driven by innovation/research, leadership excellence and high skills;
- High employment rates and few concentrations of low employment rates with decent work in sustainable workplaces;
- Vibrant (cultural offer, activities, lifestyle choices) cities, towns, coastal and rural areas;
- Communities and places in which people feel safe and proud have a sense of belonging and get on well together with people from different backgrounds;
- A regionally distinctive natural and marine environment which has rich biodiversity;
- Good quality green infrastructure and public open space/parks accessible to all;

- Low levels of carbon emissions.

The Role of the North West – What Makes the Region Unique

3.7 A number of elements are presented to define the North West's unique contribution to the future UK, European and World economy:

- The people, diverse culture, sport, positive external image and trading heritage with a critical mass of activity (from Liverpool and Manchester brands through to the Lake District - a juxtaposition of huge metropolitan areas and high quality landscapes). A welcoming and attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.
- Relatively high skill, low cost location able to service the world due to connectivity and time zones.
- Quality, diversity and character of natural and coastal environmental assets, including sustainable land management and food production, and availability of brownfield and employment land providing the potential for growth with minimal environmental impact.
- Potential renewables and nuclear energy offer.
- Advanced Engineering/Materials strengths.
Small, but highly productive bio-medical strengths and, potentially, an emerging digital and creative sector.
- History in, and critical mass of, innovation, science, research and university assets.
- International Port and Airports.

Challenges

3.8 The region has a number of persistent challenges which must be addressed if our social, environmental and economic goals are to be met. The following significant challenges for the North West are presented:

- Ill-Health, including mental health, and the economic/social impacts of this. The Northwest has over 400,000 incapacity claimants.
- Relatively poor quality, ageing house stock and limited choice in parts of the region and the need to increase the new build supply (across tenure, type, and affordability). The Northwest has a higher rate of dwelling stock deemed unfit than the England average.
- Areas of entrenched (and often intergenerational) deprivation and inequality and poor levels of social cohesion in some areas. Fifteen out of the top twenty most deprived lower super output areas in the 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation are in the Northwest.
- External perceptions of the region and some evidence of low expectations or aspirations within some of our communities.
- Attraction and retention of highly skilled and talented people.
- Low education and skills levels, including leadership, in parts of the region. In 2007 nearly 10% of 16-18 year-olds in the Northwest were understood to be Not in Education, Employment, or Training, the third highest level amongst English regions.
Low employment rates. Only 12 local authorities in the Northwest have an employment rate of more than 70%.
- Lower levels of enterprise, enterprise culture & entrepreneurship, with the Northwest performing below national averages on surveys and recorded business starts.
- Growing congestion on the transport networks in parts of the region, and constraints in other places from poor connectivity and poor public transport.

- High levels of energy use & relatively poor utility infrastructure.
- Integration of urban areas more effectively with their rural hinterlands to tackle remoteness from growth and deliver sustainable markets for rural businesses.
- Volume and management of waste.
- Dealing with threats to and protection, management and enhancement of environmental, cultural and historic assets.
- Risks to markets and sectors of global climate change and to businesses, homes and places from flooding.
- Productivity and competitiveness relative to other international economies and emergence of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China).

Issues

3.9 In preparing the Principles and Issues Paper, NWDA and 4NW believe that the following points are particularly pertinent from the evidence base to date:

- **Low Carbon Economy, Resource Use and Water:** the need to improve efficiency of energy and resource use, reduce waste generation and manage waste and define what sustainable consumption and production mean for the North West. The region could become a net exporter of electricity from low carbon sources given its nuclear, wind and tidal resources.
- **Urban Growth:** growth will continue to be driven by our cities and towns. Manchester will continue to be central to the North West as a major driver of growth and together with Liverpool, offers huge assets and opportunities for the region.
- **Connectivity:** the region will need to significantly improve its sustainable transport infrastructure and wider connectivity. There is also the importance of strong digital connectivity in a future which is likely to see continued rapid technological change.
- **Places and Communities:** the regional strategy will need to be clear about the potential future strengths of places and their inter-relationships alongside addressing issues to do with spatial disadvantage.
- **Natural Environment and Rural Areas:** the outstanding natural environment and rural economy are clear assets for the region. The natural environment, including air, soils, water, landscapes and bio-diversity provide crucial eco-system services to the region and we need to manage these to achieve sustainable growth.
- **Skills and Talent:** the region needs to develop, retain and attract talent if it is to achieve sustainable growth and increased productivity. Ensuring access to high quality education/training, supporting sustainable, vibrant and safe communities across the region and ensuring a balanced housing offer will be essential to retaining and attracting talent.
- **Health and Worklessness:** ill-health, health inequalities and worklessness have not improved significantly in the region over the last thirty years. An integrated and fresh approach to change the culture and raise people's aspirations should be considered.
- **Innovation:** the region has strengths in science, R&D and the size of its Higher Education base and a long history of innovation. We need to encourage more people to study STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects in order to maintain and keep the skills for this sector in the region.

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** the region has clear strengths in advanced manufacturing and the importance of 'making' and exporting products and services cannot be under-estimated as has been seen in the current recession.
- **Nature of Growth and Role of the Public Sector:** there will be a need to think carefully about the nature of economic growth post recession and the public sector has an important role to play in setting the conditions to enable sustainable growth. Sustainable public sector procurement is vital to the North West economy in terms of purchasing, locational and employment decisions made by the sector.

4. Wirral Council Consultation Response

- 4.1 The full proposed consultation response from Wirral Council addressing each of the questions posed in the Principles and Issues Paper is attached at appendix A to this report. We broadly agree with the Principles and Issues as presented in the consultation paper but suggest some additional comments.
- 4.2 We have emphasized the importance of acknowledging the wider City Regions as opposed to the Paper's focus on Liverpool and Manchester as key areas for growth. As part of this emphasis, we have put forward the case for Wirral to be considered as the 'next big opportunity' within the Regional Strategy priority areas for investment.
- 4.3 We have also put forward the infrastructure challenge as an additional priority issue for the Regional Strategy to address. We have highlighted the significant challenges in facilitating major investment both at a regional and Wirral level due to major infrastructure constraints such as limited power and digital capability in specific locations.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. The Regional Strategy will set out a 3-5 year investment/implementation plan. All decisions and investment locally, regionally and by central Government are expected to achieve the goals laid out in the Strategy.

6. Staffing implications

- 6.1 No implications arising directly from this report.

7. Equal Opportunities implications

- 7.1 The Regional Strategy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

8. Community Safety implications

- 8.1 There are no direct Community Safety implications arising from this report.

9. Local Agenda 21 implications

- 9.1 None as a direct result of this report.

10. Planning implications

10.1 The legislative changes to integrate the Regional Economic Strategy with the Regional Spatial Strategy represent a significant change to the current process, particularly with the transfer of responsibility for regional planning to the NWDA.

11. Anti-poverty implications

11.1 The Regional Strategy will aim to enable central and local government and other partners to work together to help maximize prosperity in all parts of England and tackle social deprivation and inequality.

12. Human Rights implications

12.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

13. Social Inclusion implications

13.1 The Regional Strategy will promote social inclusion.

14. Local Member Support implications

14.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

15. Background Papers

15.1 The Principles and Issues Paper and associated documents can be found at:
<http://www.nwregionalstrategy.com/>

16 RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 A corporate group met on 20th March 2009 to develop a response to the Principles and Issues Paper on behalf of Wirral Council. The consultation questions and draft response are attached at Appendix 1 of this report.

16.2 Members are recommended to:

(1) consider the content of the RS2010 Regional Strategy for England's North West Principles and Issues Paper and endorse the proposed consultation response attached at Appendix 1 for submission to NWDA on behalf of Wirral Council.

(2) authorise officers to continue to work on associated North West Regional Strategy development issues and return further reports as appropriate.

J. WILKIE

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

Appendix 1

Wirral Council Proposed Response to RS2010 Regional Strategy for England's North West: Principles and Issues Paper

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Question A

Do you believe that things will have fundamentally changed as a result of this recession and that issues of climate change, low carbon economy, competing land use pressures and the nature of future growth are important to consider?

It is likely that the recession will change some of the assumptions that we have made about the future. Due to the nature of the current economic recession, there is little intelligence on the sectors/industries at risk both in the short and long term therefore confidence in predicting growth areas is less clear. This will fundamentally impact both individual and organisational investment decisions in skills and employment in the short term. In the longer term, the impact of investment decisions within the global economy, in particular the BRIC countries, needs to be taken into account in the development of a 20 year regional strategy. Noted 'fast-moving' sectoral developments in China and Brazil are likely to impact on European markets and the North West will need to consider this alongside recession impacts in its long term strategies to manage spatial disparities and capitalise on emerging growth areas. Given the current lack of certainty regarding the future economy, it is vital that there is a premium on flexibility, allowing the Regional Strategy to take advantage of the opportunity to launch a re-fitting and re-consideration of the drivers of the emerging economy in the up-turn.

Although we agree that the recession will re-base the economy, it is also true that our existing regional priorities remain including: tackling deprivation; maintaining and creating nice places to live; ensuring a good skill base and providing a good infrastructure. Also, some locations will always make economic sense for new development, when market demand returns, such as highly accessible locations close to existing centres, infrastructure, markets and workforce and as such, should be supported to continue development. We can assume an inevitable shrinking of public finances, therefore the Strategy will need to identify the most sustainable locations for regionally significant regeneration, growth and expansion taking into account the Growth Points, priority needs for regeneration and the promotion of mixed uses in the most accessible areas.

We agree that the issue of climate change is important to consider and should represent a key and integrating theme in both the Regional Strategy and local Core Strategies. Proper account of Climate Change Planning Policy Statement key planning objectives and decision making principles will need to be included to ensure consideration of how these principles and mechanisms for tackling climate change respond to the diversity of the local area and region, including supporting sustainable rural communities.

ASSUMPTIONS

Question B

Do you agree with the assumptions listed? If not, what alternative assumptions would you make? Are there any assumptions missing?

We broadly agree with the list of assumptions presented in the paper but would suggest some additional comments.

Assumption 1: taking into account our agreement with the paper that the recession will have a fundamental impact, we would suggest that the needs and demands derived from **local** economies will provide the underlying background for economic recovery in the first instance, which will then provide opportunities to expand local specialisms back into the global economy.

There may be a need to focus on smaller scale investments and on preparing strategic sites for the future in the intervening period. The promotion of indigenous enterprise should not be ignored.

Assumption 5: environmental quality, development of renewable energy technology, infrastructure provision, quality of life and conservation of valuable resources will continue to be paramount considerations.

Assumption 6: while travel demands will remain, high and rising levels of car and road use and fossil fuel driven vehicles are still likely to be unsustainable in the longer term. Opportunities for realistic alternative forms of transport, such as water and rail, should continue to be promoted as a high priority. We need to acknowledge that there will be an increasing demand for effective engineering solutions to deliver sustainable infrastructure improvements and carbon reduction.

Assumption 7: we would argue that pressures on the green belt will not necessarily need to increase, particularly if the recession has led to high levels of vacancy in urban areas. Existing underused urban areas will have the potential to be reconfigured to provide for more compact sustainable growth, with higher levels of compatible mixed use in the most accessible locations.

Assumption 8: the impact of an increasingly ageing population, particularly those over 80 years, will lead to significant pressures on health and social care provision and will have implications for infrastructure (transport, housing: including adaptations to existing stock and the provision of specialist supported accommodation) and workforce planning.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AIMS AND GOALS

Question C

Do you agree that the focus of strategy should be on sustainable economic growth and contribute to sustainable development?

A balance needs to be reached between sustainable economic growth and sustainable development and we suggest that the focus should be sustainable development which will contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Question D

In the delivery of this, do you agree with the elements outlined? Are there elements missing? How would you prioritise them?

Take with Question E.

Question E

How do you believe these aims/goals should best be measured?

It is unclear how the strategy development will take account of spatial differences, local and sub-regional governance drivers, and compatibility with respective measurement indicators. For example, the timing of this exercise is at odds with the timetable for local intelligence led priority setting through the economic impact assessment duty placed on local authorities as recommended in the Sub National Review. We would like to see greater flexibility introduced into the strategy to take account of existing and future localised issues and priorities over the lifetime of the document. This also has implications for the prioritisation of elements and measurements of success. We would question the effectiveness of a 'one size fits all' regional approach which limits recognition of challenges and solutions by type, area or situation. Similarly, measurements of success set by regional indicators can mask localised success or failure rates. We would welcome further work to explore and consult on options for flexible activity and performance frameworks underpinning the strategy development.

THE ROLE OF THE NORTH WEST – WHAT MAKES THE REGION UNIQUE

Question F

Do you agree that these elements adequately summarise the North West's unique offer in a world economy? Are there any current or future potential elements missing?

We broadly agree with the elements selected to summarise the North West's unique offer in a world economy but would offer some comments to strengthen the basic principles.

Element 1: the regenerated city regions centred around Manchester and Liverpool represent a superb urban offer which is on the doorstep of an equally renowned rural offer. The affordability and high connectivity between the two presents a unique marketable offer.

Element 5: the long history of expertise in manufacturing and commercial sectors should be highlighted with reference to the birth and scale of the Industrial Revolution in the region.

Element 8: the long history of expertise in the maritime economy should be highlighted with reference to Liverpool's world trade links and ship building heritage.

We would suggest that the identification of recognised Urban Growth Points supported by long term public and private investment presents an additional potential offer.

Question G

Do you disagree with any of these statements?

The availability of brownfield land providing potential housing and employment space warrants a separate statement to highlight the unique offer.

Question H

Do you believe these elements will still be unique about the North West in 20 years time?

Investment and promotion in the unique offer of brownfield land should result positively in the reduction of available sites. For this reason, we would hope that this would no longer be a unique offer of the North West in twenty years time.

CHALLENGES

Question I

Do you agree with the challenges outlined for the North West over the coming 20 years? Are there any missing?

Yes we would agree with the challenges identified in the paper with some additional comments offered.

Challenge 2: Housing Stock. There is a need to recognise the gaining importance of the Private Rented Sector as a sector of choice but with the challenge of raising and maintaining standards both in property condition and in management.

Challenge 3 and 6: Worklessness and Skills issues. Significantly, Wirral has the highest rate for National Indicator 153: *worklessness in the worst performing neighbourhoods* amongst all of the local authorities in the North West region and also the second highest rate nationally. This identifies the significant scale of the challenge in the borough and the acute spatial concentrations which have to be addressed. Wirral is a significant regional and national economic player due to the range and scale of challenges and opportunities presented. This is further demonstrated when we conduct analysis of the worklessness challenge across the North

West as of the 43 local authority areas in the region, Wirral is the third largest contributor to the worklessness challenge. By expanding the focus of investment to the wider City Regions however, Wirral is ideally placed to become the 'next big thing' making significant inroads into addressing the overall regional performance challenges.

Challenge 9: Transport. The customer cost of public transport trips should also be recognised as a challenge and barrier to bus and rail use. In addition, the lack of integrated transport systems eg: bus with rail etc presents an additional challenge to the effectiveness of our existing transport systems. The new Local Transport Act gives powers to encourage partnership working with transport operators and we would suggest that the North West could pilot the implementation of regional partnerships.

There are a number of significant challenges not presented in the paper which we offer for inclusion as follows:

Role of Public Sector: the Principles and Issues Paper presents the scale and resource of the public sector as an opportunity for growth. We agree that we need to examine the potential of the public sector to support growth, however the paper needs to reflect the likely contraction in resource (both human and financial) due to recession impacts on public finance. As the North West is heavily reliant on this sector, changes in funds and/or structures could quickly become a significant challenge for the region.

Border Challenges: the North West is unique in its border positioning with both Scotland and Wales, each with their own legislative and devolutionary powers. This presents a significant challenge for the region, particularly played out in Wirral/Cheshire with transport, business and education funding, planning, development and customer use. The Dee Estuary has a significant role to play in green infrastructure and tourism developments as part of the North West offer and investment in the transport infrastructure ie: the Wrexham to Bidston line, would open up access as well as providing the wider economic benefits of linking areas of opportunity to communities of need.

Inward Investment: how we address inward investment as a region is a significant challenge due to the size and breadth of offer across the region. Retaining focus on Liverpool and Manchester as drivers of the economy potentially limits the offer to the core urban zone and potentially misses the opportunities in the outlying city region economies. The danger is that the outlying areas become 'dormant' economies (predominantly residential areas serving a city workforce) which in turn presents an increasing strain on sustainable transport issues.

Infrastructure: enabling the region to maximise its re-development and inward investment potential is reliant on the supporting infrastructure. Key strategic areas of the North West suffer significant challenges in lack of power supplies (parts of the Wirral Business Park) and lack of adequate digital capability (fibre optic links into Wirral).

ISSUES

Question J

Do you agree that the list of major issues for the region to address via the Regional Strategy are correct and will lead to sustainable and equitable economic, social and environmental wellbeing? Are there any issues you would remove? Are there any issues missing from your perspective? How would you prioritise these issues?

The issues arise from the challenges for the North West presented in the paper and as such are appropriate. The infrastructure challenge as highlighted in our response to Question I: Missing Challenges, warrants inclusion as a significant issue for the region to address via the Regional

Strategy in order to enable economic growth. The impact in Wirral highlights how the lack of adequate infrastructure presents a significant issue for the region.

Wirral faces a number of significant challenges in facilitating major investment and development over the next five years, particularly in relation to major infrastructure constraints. In fact, the ability to resolve these infrastructure issues is one of the biggest challenges in overcoming market failure. Whilst a number of brownfield sites have been identified for development for employment use, the utilities required for facilitating the private sector investment require updating and upgrading. Without the necessary power supply to support new investment and development, many opportunities will never get beyond feasibility stage. The majority of sites in Wirral's two regionally strategic sites (Wirral International Business Park and Birkenhead's Docklands and Enterprise Zone) potentially require power supply to make them viable.

Alongside the general utility issues, there is a strategic requirement in Wirral to drive new investment technologies by promoting Wirral more competitively as an investor location, creating employment opportunities and contributing to the delivery of the Investment Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy. Fast and reliable internet connectivity can influence business decisions on where to locate and support organisational innovation and access to new markets. There is currently insufficient bandwidth in Wirral to support high-speed services along the 'last mile' via domestic telephone cables. In Wirral, as in other areas across the region, an adequate local fibre-optic broadband infrastructure could provide an important source of competitive advantage.

Question K

Do you agree with the assertions made in these issues? Have you got any specific comments on the issues raised or the inter-relationships between them?

With regards to the assertions made in the issues outlined in this paper, we offer some additional comments for consideration.

Low Carbon Economy, Resource Use and Water: policies need to be justifiable and robust to deliver growth and provision in the renewable energy sector through a credible evidence base and well developed and deliverable policy. Sustainable appraisal needs to be an integral part of gathering of evidence and policy testing for any climate change strategy. In order to start the process, there needs to be a thorough exploration and mapping of all renewable energy providers, partnerships and stakeholder arrangements to make the best use of existing climate change skills and knowledge in developing policy. Monitoring and review processes will need to be undertaken in a timely way, focusing on measuring outcomes and refining policy and practice to deal with climate change, mitigation and adaptation throughout the life of the plan period. There needs to be recognition of locational and technical constraints and opportunities for renewable energy development with the potential sensitivities around sustainable energy installations.

Urban Growth: the focus of the narrative is too narrow with a concentration on the growth of Liverpool and Manchester. It is vital that the Regional Strategy acknowledges the need to take the next steps to drive opportunities arising from the wider central areas of the **City Regions**, enhancing the overall City offer by expanding the focus towards neighbouring Boroughs in order to spread the opportunities for investment and wealth. Regionally, unless a unique opportunity is identified, a strategic review of the green belt should be opposed until opportunities in the urban areas have been fully exploited eg: Woodside, Wirral Waters as specific Wirral examples. The new Growth Points will be significant areas of opportunity for urban growth and merit greater significance in the regional strategy as do the areas of HMRI.

Connectivity: all themes support growth with the exception of transport which is subject to constraint policies. We need to acknowledge that while constraint policy supports the development of alternative, sustainable solutions, we are still going to require adequate systems for car use in the short to medium term. An acknowledgment of this enables the inclusion of selective areas that require expansion to meet 'over demand' such as car parking solutions and highway improvements. Alongside this, the Regional Strategy needs to prioritise key existing and potential transport developments which themselves contribute to reducing car use such as:

- Borderlands: extending transport solutions to reduce car use and improve employment opportunities for people from areas of high deprivation;
- Rail Freight Link: reducing the need for reliance on lorry distribution, making the best use of existing infrastructure and increasing port activity;
- Port Wirral: post panamax developments and making use of the ship canal by bringing the waterways into modern use.

Digital connectivity is not given sufficient weight within this issue and we would suggest is fully explored within a separate infrastructure issue as presented within our response at Question J.

Places and Communities: We agree that an important part of contributing to regional prosperity and economic growth is creating places and balanced communities that offer a quality of life to existing residents and are attractive to potential residents particularly those who are driven to move home due to employment reasons. A key contributor to this is the place-shaping role that the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) programme is delivering as part of the restructure of failing housing markets in the inner urban core of Merseyside. The HMR programme is now, after 5 years, starting to transform some of the places in Merseyside where housing market decline and low demand was most concentrated. The programme is now at a key stage of seeing large sites being assembled for new-build housing of a type, mix and density to sustain places in the long term, and innovative solutions are being adopted to sustain a house-building programme in Wirral through the period of recession to support the local economy and meet immediate local housing needs.

We welcome the inclusion of identified additional areas with unique opportunities and challenges which are offered for consideration as part of the strategy. We believe Wirral offers the mix of significant challenges and opportunities that warrants its inclusion in this analysis of places and communities. Wirral faces a number of challenges that must be addressed if it is to become a thriving place for employment and enterprise. Key issues are:

- Low rate of business start-ups (although survival rates are improving)
- Low stock of VAT-registered businesses
- Very low job density
- Decline in employment in Wirral since the late 1990s
- Low rate of self-employment
- Below national average productivity in both manufacturing and services
- Growing gap in skill levels and prosperity within Wirral
- A shortfall in quantity and quality of sites/premises for modern business need

Gross Value Added (GVA), a standard indicator of wealth creation is relatively low, given the number of working age residents. In 2003, GVA per working age adult was 30% below the North West average, and there have been few signs of the gap closing in recent years. GVA per worker also falls short of the North West level by 20%.

Despite the significant challenges facing the borough, the future strengths and opportunities are clear:

- Wirral Waters is a transformational, 30 year, £4.5 billion, dockland regeneration scheme being taken forward through a partnership with Peel Holdings (the major land-owner) and Wirral Council.
- The Mersey Heartlands New Growth Point offers unique opportunities and includes the entire HMRI area in Wirral. Major private sector investment is already being delivered and a significant amount is being proposed over the next 30 years with a potential value

in excess of £10bn. The area represents a significant opportunity to deliver transformational economic development in inner Merseyside, providing thousands of new jobs and delivering new housing to support economic growth.

- Wirral has two areas in scope as part of the present review of Regional Strategic Sites for the North West, namely Wirral International Business Park and Wirral Docklands.

Natural Environment and Rural Areas: we would make a general point about the need to use a range of relevant evidence and information sources. For example, with regard to the 'State of the Rural North West Report' recently produced by SQW, there is an issue about using this as the key rural economy evidence base for the NW. Because of the (Defra) classifications and data used, Merseyside is not featured at all within this report.

It is important to therefore consider a range of additional evidence and information about the rural economy – such as the Merseyside Rural Economy Strategy currently being developed. This is using some proxy definitions and data sets to capture the extent of the rural economy across Merseyside. For example, this research includes analysis of the substantial areas within the green belt in Merseyside, as well as the significant coast and countryside swathes. It is important to consider local and sub-regional priorities and to deliver resources and solutions at the appropriate spatial level. Furthermore, there are a number of important messages at the local and sub-regional level that should be reflected in RS2010. These include:

- rural and urban economies are strongly integrated and inter-dependent
- issues, challenges and opportunities vary across different types of rural areas
- important economic contribution of businesses located in rural areas and home to highly skilled populations
- high quality distinctive environments that attract visitors, highly skilled people and businesses to the NW
- Quality of Life and health benefits
- important role in tackling climate change (eg biomass) and taking advantage of low carbon opportunities, energy and food security, sustainable consumption/production
- need to consider high earnings differential between resident and workplace earnings

There is a need to consider the use of a number of data sets. For example when considering Business Support in rural areas, reliance of numbers of VAT registrations as an indicator will underestimate the large numbers of farmers whose businesses are operating at sub-VAT levels. Within BSSP, need to consider challenges in delivery of business support in rural areas.

It is essential that detailed consideration is given to land usage and food production – both in the short term and also as part of wider strategic international discussions. Clear differentiation is needed between open countryside in rural areas and open countryside in Green Belt areas.

We would raise a number of general points that need further consideration as the Regional Strategy is developed – including:

Challenges

- micro/small businesses rely more heavily on personal finance;
- low wages for rural workers create difficulties
- difficulties in raising awareness of support available
- stalled infrastructure investments

Opportunities

- government support for low carbon future, opportunities for biomass
- some evidence of upward trends in business starts in rural areas
- increased opportunities for tourism due to falling personal wealth and Euro exchange rate

Skills and Talent: In light of the uncertainty in the current jobs market the Regional Strategy should be cautious in its focus on specific sectors for drivers for growth. Over marketing of specific sectors has a significant impact on both institutional and personal investment decisions in skills training. We would suggest careful consideration on how to present the emerging growth sectors beyond recession and reflect the need for broad skills to meet any uncertainty in future markets. To support this, there is a need for flexible qualification routes and a change in the traditional education and skills landscape. The paper is relatively weak on utilising the education sector and the need to drive institutional change eg: vocational HE and industry-based skills at secondary school level.

Health and Worklessness: we welcome the inclusion of health and worklessness as a significant issue for the Regional Strategy and agree that the region has not seen significant improvement in the last 20-30 years. Partners across the Liverpool City Region are currently developing a **Fit for Work** activity, to support those on sickness absence back into employment and reduce the flow of people from work onto Employment Support Allowance. This approach has been taken to accelerate this model of early intervention as recommended by Dame Carol Black in Working for a Healthier Tomorrow. Partners in Wirral have established a Wirral Working for Health partnership that consists of NHS partners, Wirral Council, Jobcentre Plus, Trade Unions and organisations from the third sector. The Partnership has been commissioned through Working Wirral (WNF) to deliver a programme of interventions to tackle the health and worklessness issue. We would argue, however, that there are additional worklessness issues outside of the health theme that remain a clear focus for addressing and warrant worklessness as a single issue in its own right. This would provide the flexibility and opportunity to support innovative pilot programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of individuals living in our most deprived areas through the Regional Strategy.

Innovation: we would welcome a focus on exploiting the potential of our innovation spin-out companies within our SME base and attracting existing and new incubator enterprises from the knowledge based industry sector. With our strong Further and Higher Education base, the North West could further capitalise on its advantages as a region to develop and grow this sector. Whilst the focus of the paper is on exploiting the research, innovation and post-graduate potential of the HEI sector, it is also important to recognise the potential of the under-graduate element and the issue of connecting HE with surrounding communities.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23rd APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

Wirral Apprenticeship Programme

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 As part of the Council Budget 2009/10 resolutions, officers were asked to explore the possibilities for developing an apprenticeship scheme across the public and private sector similar to the Knowsley Apprentice scheme. This report presents an approach to delivering such a scheme across Wirral supported through Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) resources to a maximum of £1.7m. Members are asked to support the approach presented and to authorise officers to proceed to delivery subject to endorsement of strategic fit for use of WNF by the Wirral Economic Development & Skills Partnership.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill (February 2009) sets out the first complete overhaul of apprenticeships since the early 19th century. The new legislation will put apprenticeships on a statutory basis; establish the entitlement to an apprenticeship place for every suitably qualified young person who wants one – with a choice of two industry or service sectors. The Bill incorporates proposals that were originally published on 17 July 2008 as the Draft Apprenticeships Bill, and support the Government's plans for the expansion and strengthening of the Apprenticeship programme set out in *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All* (January 2008).
- 2.2 The Government aims to get 90,000 more young people taking part in apprenticeships by 2013. Together with opportunities for adults from twenty plus, this will mean 220,000 people starting an apprenticeship each year. As part of this drive to increase numbers, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have signed up to a joint target to double the number of apprenticeships in local authorities by 2010. These targets are a step towards the long-term ambition that one in five young people will undertake an apprenticeship by 2020 and 250,000 adults will start one.
- 2.3 On 1st April 2009, the new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was launched. The NAS will operate both at national and sub-regional level and its duties will include: overall responsibility for delivery of the Government's policy on apprenticeships; co-ordinating the funding of all apprenticeship places; and establishing and maintaining a national matching service for employers and would-be apprentices. This last duty, the National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service (NAVMS), aims to enable employers to advertise their positions and prospective applicants, anywhere in the country, to search for them and apply as appropriate. The relationship between the NAS and local authorities will be critically

important given the upcoming local authority duty to ensure participation and quality for 16-18 year olds. The basic operating principles will be:

- Each local authority will plan post-16 provision and will notify NAS of anticipated volumes of apprenticeship demand from young people;
- Responsibility for finding an apprenticeship place will be discharged by the NAS on behalf of the local authority, and funding will be granted to the NAS according to anticipated and/or desired volumes;
- The NAS will be statutorily required to maintain a management information flow to local authorities on the status of all apprentices resident in their areas, notifying them of applications, completions and lapses.

3. Apprenticeships: Key Facts

- 3.1 There are more than 180 Apprenticeship Frameworks available across more than 80 industry sectors. There are no set entry requirements for apprenticeships and they are open to anyone living in England, currently not in full-time education or not holding a university degree. Entry requirements are flexible because apprenticeships are not just based on academic achievement. However, for some more technical apprenticeships you may need GCSE grades A*- C in Mathematics, English and Science.
- 3.2 Apprenticeships are open to all age groups, not just young people. Apprenticeship opportunities for people aged 25 and over were introduced in August 2007. Apprentices under the age of 19 do not qualify for the national minimum wage but must receive a wage of no less than £80 per week, rising to £95 per week from August 2009. Apprentices over the age of 19 can also be paid at the apprentice rate in their first year as they are exempt from national minimum wage in their first 12 months. Research shows, however, that the average apprentice earns £170 net pay per week and those on the lowest pay have the highest rate of drop out.
- 3.3 The Learning & Skills Council fully fund the training costs for 16-18 year old apprentices and part fund the training costs for those 19+. Most apprenticeships last between one and two years and can lead to:
- A National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 2 or Level 3
 - Key Skills qualifications like problem solving and using technology
 - A relevant Technical Certificate such as BTEC or City & Guilds
 - Other qualifications needed for particular occupations

4. Wirral Context

- 4.1 Wirral recognises its challenge to increase economic activity in the borough and narrow the gap between the regional and England average. This is reflected in Wirral's ambitious Investment Strategy approved in 2007. This highlights the scale of the challenge and the key strategic priorities required to ensure Wirral achieves its ambition to become an economically vibrant area.
- 4.2 Significantly, Wirral has the highest rate of National Indicator 153: 'Worklessness in the worst performing neighbourhoods' amongst all of the local authorities in the Northwest and also the second highest rate nationally, which illustrates the significant challenge in the borough. Through the Local Area Agreement, Wirral partners have pledged to reduce the number of workless people in the worst

performing areas by 2.5 percentage points over 3 years, equal to bringing an additional 1,154 people back into the jobs market.

- 4.3 Equally important to the economic future of the borough is our performance in relation to young people. Nearly 90% of 16-year-olds stay on in school or college or go into employment. However the numbers of young people not engaged in education, employment and training (NEET) is an important challenge, and reducing these numbers is a priority. Starting from a baseline figure of 9.5% in 2007, Wirral partners have pledged to reduce the number of NEET 16-18 year olds by 2.6 percentage points over 3 years through the Local Area Agreement.
- 4.4 Looking at the latest data, 1,106 Wirral residents have started an apprenticeship in the 2008/09 year to date. There are currently over 180 apprenticeship frameworks on offer nationally which provides opportunities in a wide range of career paths. Out of the 2008/09 starts on apprenticeships in Wirral, the top 5 sector frameworks are:
1. Business Administration
 2. Hairdressing
 3. Customer Service
 4. Engineering
 5. Health & Social Care
- 4.5 The impact of the current economic downturn is starting to have an effect on the availability of apprenticeship places in the borough. Whilst demand for places from young people continues to be high, employers are finding it increasingly difficult to support the business case for employing apprentices and have access to a growing available 'job ready' labour supply. Anecdotal evidence gathered to date illustrates this trend. For example, the average cost of training for companies accessing Skillworks has decreased as companies reduce their training plans / budgets and training providers are reporting an increase in apprentices losing their jobs. Whilst the provider can maintain the apprentice on programme it is difficult in this climate to find alternative employment and the immediate impact for the apprentice is a loss of earnings and confidence which can result in them leaving the apprenticeship opportunity, potentially leading to social exclusion and long term unemployment.

5. Wirral Wide Apprenticeship Programme: Approach to Delivery

- 5.1 The LSC currently fund work based learning providers directly for the training element of the apprenticeship programme. Whilst there are indicative regional and contractual budgets, funding is allocated to providers on the principles of the demand led model.
- 5.2 Wirral therefore, intends to deliver a programme of direct support to employers in order to stimulate the supply of available apprentice places in the workplace. Taking account of the current economic climate, a wage subsidy model is proposed. Subsidised employment models have the potential to introduce an element of 'over-training' into the marketplace, however, there is a strong argument to provide incentivised apprenticeship places in the current climate in order to provide a quality career route with accredited qualifications in preparation for an upturn in the market. This model follows the approach taken by Knowsley MBC. A case study of the Knowsley Apprentice is attached for information at Appendix A.

- 5.3 Aim: The aim is to stimulate the supply of 100 new apprentice places in the workplace available for residents of Wirral. Whilst demand for places continues to be high, employers are finding it increasingly difficult in the current economic climate to support the business case for employing apprentices and have access to a growing available 'job ready' labour supply. Furthermore, this project will potentially contribute to the reduction in NEET, including some vulnerable groups as well as the broadening of the post-16 offer in line with 14-19 developments.
- 5.4 Target Individuals: The Wirral wide apprenticeship programme policy framework will target the following priority individuals (Wirral residency eligibility criteria) in order to ensure a strategic fit with the needs of businesses and Wirral's Investment Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Wirral Employment & Enterprise Investment Framework:
- NEET 16-18 year olds;
 - 16-18 year olds at risk of becoming NEET;
 - Entry to Employment (E2E) leavers;
 - Looked after children
 - Young adults (19+) who are workless
- 5.5 Target Businesses: In order to ensure a fair an open process but also provide added value by stimulating new additional apprenticeship places a targeted approach will be taken with priority business types (Wirral and Non-Wirral eligibility criteria) as follows:
- Small to medium enterprises (SME) with no history of apprenticeship placements – proposed 50% proportion
 - Public sector organisations – proposed 25% proportion
 - Large, medium and small enterprises with prior history of apprenticeship placements – proposed 25% proportion
- 5.6 Wage Subsidy: In order to support a sustainable wage for apprentices on programme, the wage subsidy will be set at the national minimum wage rate for 18-21 year olds, currently £4.77 per hour. To support sustainability into the second year of the apprentice framework, it is proposed that the subsidy be payable for a maximum of 18 months. In return, the employer will be expected to offer a minimum 2 year contract of employment to the apprentice.
- 5.7 Delivery Organisation: In order to ensure a co-ordinated approach, the programme will be delivered by Wirral Council's Children & Young People's Department in collaboration with 14-19 Partnership member organisations. This ensures strategic fit with the upcoming transfer of LSC duties in respect of 16-18 year olds to the local authority and synergy with current responsibilities for the priority target groups.
- 5.8 Links with NAS: the project will work closely with the new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) in both the promotion and matching of places and will support the new NAS team to establish new markets for apprenticeships in Wirral. The offer of financial support for employers will provide a valuable incentive in the current climate which would be otherwise unavailable.
- 5.9 Timescales: It is proposed that the Wirral wide apprenticeship programme operates within the Working Wirral suite of initiatives. This offers a funding period

up to March 2011 which will allow for recruitment of apprentices up to and including September 2009.

- 5.10 Indicative Budget: Based on the proposed wage subsidy and an average 40 hour working week, each apprentice place will cost £14,882.40, (less for shorter weekly contracted hours). A maximum budget of £1,700,000 will support the placement of a minimum 100 apprentices with allowance for additional operational or beneficiary costs (such as National Minimum Wage requirements for those aged 19+ in their second year of the programme).
- 5.11 Funding: In March 2008, Wirral Council cabinet agreed that the Working Neighbourhood Fund resources, together with the Deprived Area Fund and the European Social Fund Complementary Strand, should be used to commission activity to deliver the Investment Strategy priorities of tackling worklessness, improving skills, increasing enterprise, business growth and investment. The Wirral wide apprenticeship programme demonstrates strategic fit with the Wirral Employment & Enterprise Investment Framework; specifically: Priority 1, Strand 1A: Tackling Barriers to Work and Linking People to Jobs and Priority 1, Strand 1B: Supporting Skills Progression. To this end, the programme will be commissioned through the Working Wirral programme to maximum of £1.7m.
- 5.12 Reporting: Performance will be regularly reported through the Children & Young Peoples Department Plan arrangements, Learning and Achievement Branch performance management arrangements and to the 14-19 Partnership. Further updates will be reported to Cabinet as appropriate by the Children & Young Peoples Department.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 In March 2008, Wirral Council cabinet agreed that the Working Neighbourhood Fund (part of the Area Based Grant), together with the Deprived Area Fund and the European Social Fund Complementary Strand, should be used to commission activity to deliver the Investment Strategy priorities of tackling worklessness, improving skills, increasing enterprise, business growth and investment via an overarching Working Wirral Programme. It is proposed that the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme be commissioned through Working Wirral. A maximum of £1.7 million will be required over the period 2009/11 and the sum available is dependant upon receipt of the level of Working Neighbourhood Funding indicated for 2010/11.

7. Staffing implications

- 7.1 No implications arising directly from this report. Any new staffing requirements arising from implementation will be brought to the Employment and Appointments Select Committee from the Children & Young People's Department.

8. Equal Opportunities implications

- 8.1 The implementation of the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme will reflect the Council's commitment to equal opportunities.

9. Community Safety implications

9.1 There are no direct Community Safety implications arising from this report.

10. Local Agenda 21 implications

10.1 None as a direct result of this report.

11. Planning implications

11.1 There are no direct planning implications arising from this report.

12. Anti-poverty implications

12.1 As part of the Working Wirral suite of projects, the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme will have significant future benefits for this area.

13. Human Rights implications

13.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

14. Social Inclusion implications

14.1 As part of the Working Wirral suite of projects, the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme will have significant future benefits for this area.

15. Local Member Support implications

15.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

16. Background Papers

16.1 Details of learning through apprenticeship as well as links and contact information can be found at <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

17. Recommendations

17.1 Members are recommended to:

- (1) approve the approach to delivering the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme
- (2) authorise officers to proceed to implementation subject to endorsement of strategic fit for use of WNF by the Wirral Economic Development & Skills Partnership

J. WILKIE

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

1. THE KNOWSLEY APPRENTICE CASE STUDY

Knowsley set out with a target to get 100 young people into apprenticeships in 100 days to support the GCSE school leavers (16+) who would prefer to seek paid employment than go on to full time education. £1.5m was secured through Knowsley's Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) to resource a subsidised apprentice wage for employers.

Internally, KMBC had taken a cabinet decision to create 36 apprenticeships over 2 years, employed full time in scale 1,2,3,4 posts. 21 of these apprenticeship places have since been achieved through converting existing employees onto apprenticeship starts.

For the Knowsley Apprentice, KMBC wanted to create a simple, non-bureaucratic programme which could offer an affordable route for businesses to take on an apprentice. The challenge was also to ensure that the £1.5m WNF was fully spent on the apprentices; ie: to cover wage and/or training subsidies, without top slicing the fund for scheme administration. These aims were achieved by creating a single point of access for businesses at KMBC; devising a single form for completion by the employer; and administering the scheme through existing staff at KMBC, Connexions etc.

A Connexions Adviser has been seconded to KMBC to deal with the interface between the employer and the training provider, while KMBC staff deal with administration of the wage subsidy scheme and act as the single point of access to businesses. Each employer enters into a legally binding commitment to the principles of the Knowsley Apprentice programme with arrangements for claw back of funds should they not fulfil their commitment. The apprentices are contracted to the employer for 3 years with wages unsubsidised for the final 18 months and all on-costs throughout paid by the employer. The wage subsidy is paid direct to the business by KMBC on a month by month basis.

The programme itself followed a 5 step process:

- Sign up of businesses interested in the scheme
- Advertising for applicants through Connexions/Youth organisations
- A block period of recruitment and assessment days
- Employer interviews of the short-listed applicants
- Entering into contracts, legalities and induction process

The Knowsley Apprentice provides a standardised offer for both the employer and the apprentice.

The employer offer is:

- An 18month subsidy towards a young employee with 100% of salary paid in year one, 50% in year 2
- An accredited training package up to NVQ level 3
- A managed search, recruitment, and selection process
- On going business support via a single point of access

The apprentice offer is:

- A minimum hourly wage of £4.77 including 16 & 17yr olds. This is equivalent to the NMW for 18-21yrs and exceeds the £80 pwk minimum for apprenticeships (due to rise to £95 in August 2009)
- The support of a personal mentor

- A 3 year employment contract offering training to NVQ level 3

Results so far:

- 33 businesses signed up to the programme
- 650 young applicants for an apprenticeship place
- 106 apprentices on placement
- 21 on apprenticeship through this programme with KMBC
- Plans to repeat the process this year

Lessons learnt from the first wave of Knowsley Apprentice:

- Consideration needs to be given to the time of year the recruitment and selection process takes place
- Consideration needs to be given to targeting of applicants to ensure there is added value through the increase in take up of apprenticeships from priority groups such as NEET, areas of high deprivation, traditional low take up groups etc
- Concentrating time and effort on ensuring contracts and legalities are set up prior to starts is essential for the smooth running of the programme
- Concentrating time and effort on building a relationship with businesses is also essential

Contact Details @ KMBC:

Nick Kavanagh: Executive Director Regeneration, Economy & Skills

E: nick.kavanagh@knowsley.gov.uk

T: 0151 443 2242

Phillipa Cook: Head of Communications

E: phillipa.cook@knowsley.gov.uk

T: 0151 443 3062

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

BUSINESS START UP PANEL: INDEMNITY AGREEMENT WITH NORTH WEST DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Members for authorisation to indemnify the North West Development Agency (NWDA) against any breach of confidentiality that may arise from the Council accessing information from their Business Start Up Provider Panel (BSUP Panel) which has been procured in connection with their implementation of the new Business Start Programme. The decision is required urgently for the reasons set out in this report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members may be aware that the Government is looking to streamline the provision of business support activity as part of its Business Support Simplification (BSS) Programme. It is estimated that it currently spends up to £2.5 billion a year on a range of business support activities, including business start, with public bodies frequently unaware of the support that others provide. This has led to duplication and inefficiency, as well as confusion for the business support target customer group.

2.2 The BSS Programme, which will be managed locally by the NWDA, will provide a focused and targeted range of interventions that will be clearer and easier to understand by businesses and, by reducing duplication, will simplify the delivery arrangements for publicly funded business support.

2.3 One of the first services to be rolled out from the BSS Programme is business start. The North West Development Agency has already procured the BSUP Panel of potential service providers for the Merseyside Sub-Region following a competitive tendering exercise. The next stage in the process is for North West Authorities, including Wirral, to procure a business start provider(s) from the BSUP Panel, via a mini tendering exercise, to run and manage the revised business start service as part of the BSS Programme.

2.4 To enable the mini tendering exercise to be undertaken it is necessary for the Council to access, via an extranet link, sensitive pricing information that the Agency holds on each of the providers it has placed on the BSUP Panel. However, before the Agency will make available this information it has requested that the Council sign an indemnity/ and disclaimer which protects the Agency on a range of issues which are set out below:

- The NWDA will give no warranty, undertaking or guarantee in respect of the ability of the Council to use the Business Start Up Provider Panel (BSUP Panel) or in respect of any procedure for awarding individual projects; and /or
- The NWDA will have no liability whatsoever to the Council in relation to its use of the BSUP Panel or the Panel Information; and /or
- The NWDA will give no warranty, undertaking or guarantee in relation to the performance of the BSUP Panel members; and/or

- The Council will be responsible for ensuring its own duty of care obligation from the BSUP Panel members in its favour in relation to any services provided by the BSUP Panel members and/or
- The NWDA will give no warranty, undertaking or guarantee in relation to the information provided by the BSUP Panel members . The NWDA may determine or change any BSUP Panel appointments within the limits allowed by the individual panel appointments and/or
- The Council will keep in confidence all information provided to it by the NWDA and indemnify the NWDA from any claim arising and related to the Council's use of the panel information

2.5 Consultation with Legal Services and the Risk Insurance Officer indicates that while the risk that this request poses to the Authority is minimal (due in part to the information only being disclosed to a very small number of senior officers) it cannot be totally managed away. However, the Council's support to businesses underpins the corporate priority of creating more jobs, achieving a prosperous economy and regenerating Wirral and any failure or negligence on the part of the Council, or its staff, in discharging these responsibilities (including the way that it uses the information on suppliers) would be covered by the Council's Liability Insurance Policy.

2.6 Authority to sign the indemnity sought by the NWDA is not delegated to officers and therefore the authorisation of Members is required. On balance, the residual risk to the Council of providing the indemnity sought by the NWDA and acceptance of the NWDA disclaimer is considered acceptable as the Council will not be able to participate in the BSS Programme without having access to the BSUP Panel information. Accordingly provision of the indemnity sought and acceptance of the NWDA disclaimers is recommended.

3.0 **URGENT DECISION**

3.1 The reason why Members need to take this decision now is to allow the mini-tendering exercise to be undertaken and a new business start provider(s) selected in time for the new Business Start Programme to be operational from July 1st 2009. Members may recall that the current Programme 'Wirralbiz' is due to end on June 30th 2009 in anticipation of the changes outlined in this report.

3.2 Clearly without Members authorisation to enter into the indemnity with the NWDA this timetable will slip and could hinder the Council's ability to procure the new Business Start Programme.

4.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 It is not possible to identify the financial implications of any potential future third party claim that may result from signing the disclaimer/indemnity but the risk is minimal and the way that the Council will manage the information will make it most unlikely that any claims will arise.

5.0 **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This indemnity agreement can be managed within existing staff resources.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None directly arising out of this report.

8.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no Local Agenda 21 Implications in this report.

9.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None.

11.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 No background papers used in the compilation of this report.

14.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 That Members authorise the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to sign the North West Development Agency's Indemnity and Disclaimer to allow the selection of a new Business Start Service provider as detailed in this report.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by David Ball who can be contacted on 691 8305.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The preparation and publication of an Annual Governance Statement is necessary to meet the statutory requirement set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006.
- 1.2. This report explains the requirement for the Authority to produce the Annual Governance Statement declaring the degree to which it meets the Governance Framework.
- 1.3. The Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 is attached at Appendix 1.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 required Councils to review the “effectiveness of their system of internal control” and to publish a Statement on Internal Control (SIC) with the Financial Statements of the Local Authority each year. It also required the findings of the review to be considered by a Committee of the Council.
- 2.2. On 18 August 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued circular 03/2006. Section 7 states that proper practice in relation to internal control relates to guidance contained in two documents:
 - Statement on Internal Control in Local Government; meeting the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, published by CIPFA in 2004.
 - Corporate Governance in Local Government; A Keystone for Community Governance (Framework and Guidance Note), produced by CIPFA in 2001.
- 2.3. The Corporate Governance in Local Government publication was updated in 2007 and replaced with the CIPFA /SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework. This required the production and publication of an Annual Governance Statement by the Council to replace and subsume the Statement on Internal Control from 2008. A report was presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on the Framework and the requirements for this organisation on 27 September 2007.

3. GOVERNANCE

- 3.1. Governance is about how the Authority ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.
- 3.2. It comprises the systems, processes and controls, and cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with, and, where appropriate, leads the community (Source: CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government).
- 3.3 Effective governance arrangements are required to be in place to ensure that:
 - Authority policies are implemented in practice
 - Authority values and ethical standards are met
 - Laws and regulations are complied with;
 - Required processes are adhered to;
 - Financial statements and other published information are accurate and reliable;
 - Human, financial and other resources are managed efficiently and effectively; and
 - High-quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

4. THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

- 4.1. The CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework requires the production of an Annual Governance Statement and CIPFA has also confirmed that the annual governance statement should subsume the requirement to produce the SIC.
- 4.2. The CIPFA Finance Advisory Network (FAN) issued a 'Rough Guide' in support of the revised Regulations in January 2007 and this includes detailed guidance regarding the process to be followed to undertake the annual governance work and prepare the actual statement.
- 4.3. The CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework provides a structure to assist local authorities with their approach to governance and identifies six core principles of good governance focussing on the systems and processes for the direction and control of the organisation and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. The Framework emphasises that good governance and therefore the process and statement should be corporately owned.
- 4.4. The six core principles referred to in the Framework that must be considered when defining good practice are:
 1. Focussing on the purpose of the Authority and on the outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.

2. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
 3. Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.
 4. Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk
 5. Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective.
 6. Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust accountability.
- 4.5. Taking account of the above, local authorities are expected to undertake the following:
- Review their existing governance arrangements against the Framework
 - Maintain an up to date local Code of Governance, including arrangements for ensuring its ongoing application and effectiveness
 - Prepare an Annual Governance Statement to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with the principles.
- 4.6. Within the Council there is a well established process for the review of the control system, collation of information and compilation and monitoring of the Annual Governance Statement that is managed by the Internal Audit Section and reported through the Corporate Improvement Group.
- 4.7. Whilst Internal Audit is responsible for undertaking the assurance work and producing the Annual Governance Statement it is important to recognise that this is not a document owned by the audit function but an Authority statement on the effectiveness of its governance processes. Therefore commitment is required by all services and senior officers involved with the process.
- 4.8. As part of this process the following arrangements have been developed to enable the production of the Annual Governance Statement:
- a. Assurance from Directors/Heads of Service:

Departmental Plans that include:
 - Risk Registers;
 - Self assessments of governance standards;
 - Self assessments of partnership governance standards;
 - Performance monitoring and analysis.

b. Assurance at a Corporate Level

- Assurance obtained from the corporate risk process, including progress in implementing improvement actions associated with individual risks;
- Corporate Governance review;
- Code of Corporate Governance review;
- Assurance from the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion;
- Assurance from various sources including the Audit Commission and other external inspection agencies.

4.9. An Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 has been prepared that includes detailed comment regarding the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in operation. This is attached at Appendix 1 and should be signed by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and included with the Statement of Accounts.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no staffing implications in this report.

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

10. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no specific implications for any Member or Ward.

11. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

11.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

12. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

12.1. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1. Annual Internal Audit Report 2008/09
- 13.2. CIPFA Statement on Internal Control in Local Government, meeting the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.
- 13.3. CIPFA/SOLACE Guidance Notes and Framework “Corporate Governance – A keystone for Community Governance” 2001.
- 13.4. CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2007.
- 13.5. Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2006.
- 13.6. CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2006.

14. RECOMMENDATION

- 14.1. That the Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 be approved for inclusion with the Financial Statements and be signed by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/83/09

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/2009

1. Scope of Responsibility

- 1.1 Wirral Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Wirral Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, Wirral Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 Wirral Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. A copy of the code is on our website at www.wirral.gov.uk. This statement explains how Wirral Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values for the direction and control of the Authority and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of not fully achieving policies, aims and objectives and therefore provides a reasonable rather than absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Wirral Council policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

2.3 The governance framework has been in place for a number of years at Wirral Council and, in particular, for the year ended 31 March 2009 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

Key elements of the systems and processes, which comprise the council's governance arrangements, are described in the following paragraphs.

3.1 Vision and Purpose

3.1.1 Wirral Council has revised its Corporate Plan setting out its objectives; there is an accompanying Performance Plan in which achievement of the objectives is monitored. This information is widely available on the authority's website.

3.1.2 The Council, working with strategic partners and local communities has agreed the following strategic objectives:-

- To create more jobs, achieve a prosperous economy and regenerate Wirral;
- To create a clean, pleasant, safe & sustainable environment;
- To improve health and well being for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society;
- To raise the aspirations of young people;
- To create an excellent council.

3.1.3 These form the basis for the Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement/Departmental Plans referred to above and provide the focus for the improvements which are being made in all areas of the Council.

3.2 Decision Making Structure

3.2.1 Wirral Council facilitates policy and decision making via a Cabinet Structure with Cabinet Member portfolios.

3.2.2 There are Overview and Scrutiny Committees covering all portfolios.

3.2.3 An Audit and Risk Management Committee provides independent assurance to the Council on risk management and control, and the effectiveness of the arrangements the Council has for these matters.

3.2.4 The Constitution clearly identifies the respective duties of each Committee, and the delegations to members and officers.

3.2.5 The Constitution is codified into one document, which is available on the intranet and external web pages.

3.2.6 The Council has a nominated Monitoring Officer whose role includes ensuring compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.

3.3 Governance and Values

3.3.1 The Council has adopted a local Code of Corporate Governance in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework 2007. The local code details how the Council complies with the principles of good corporate governance and contains appropriate monitoring and reporting procedures. It is available on the Council website.

3.3.2 The Council's Constitution contains formal codes of conduct for members and officers. Additionally, the council has established policies and procedures to embed high standards of conduct and governance. These include equalities and diversity and, 'whistle blowing'.

3.4 Service Delivery

3.4.1 Services are delivered by trained and experienced people. All posts have a detailed job description and person specification. Individual training needs are constantly identified through the Key Issues Exchange process and fed into the Departmental Training plan and addressed by the Corporate Training Group.

3.4.2 There is a comprehensive corporate induction programme in place and information regarding policies and procedures is held on the intranet, which continues to be enhanced and developed.

3.5 Risk Management

3.5.1 The Council has robust systems for identifying and evaluating all significant risks, developed and maintained with the pro-active participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services. The Council adopted a revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy in 2008. This explains the methodology for the management of risk throughout the Council. A Corporate Risk Register is in place and appropriate staff have been trained in the assessment, management and monitoring of risks. The Authority has a Risk Management Officer and the approach to embedding risk management is in accordance with best practice.

3.6 Measuring Performance and Value for Money

3.6.1 External Inspection

- The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Use of Resources framework assessed the Council as a 'Good' 3 star Authority that is improving well.
- The Audit Commission annual assessment of the Council identified that it is making good progress in a number of its priority areas.

- In its review of Access to Services, the Audit Commission assessed the Council as providing a good service with 'promising prospects for improvement ... because of its impact on improving and providing access to services to meet the needs of the borough's diverse communities – one of the Council's aims'.
- 3.6.2 The Council has in place a three year Financial Strategy, updated annually, to support the medium term aims of the Corporate Plan. This ensures the economical, effective and efficient use of resources, and secures continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, by having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- 3.6.3 The Council continues to progress the efficiency agenda and has identified and delivered significant savings in recent years. The identification of efficiencies is an integral part of the financial planning process with the delivery integrated in the performance management arrangements.
- 3.6.4 A rigorous system of monthly financial monitoring ensures that any significant budget variances are identified in a timely way, and corrective action is initiated.
- 3.6.5 The Council has an objective performance management framework. The system is driven by the Corporate Plan, which focuses attention on corporate priorities. This is cascaded through departmental service plans, individual employee key issue exchanges and action plans. It is clearly laid out in the annual service and financial planning and performance management cycle. Committees monitor and scrutinise progress against targets and performance in priority areas affecting relevant service areas, and consider and approve corrective action where necessary.

4. Review of Effectiveness

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Wirral Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Audit Annual Report, and by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. Key controls in the governance review process are identified in the following paragraphs.

4.2 Corporate Review

- 4.2.1 The Council's Corporate Improvement Group (CIG) has managed the development of the Annual Governance Statement, in consultation with the Council's Chief Internal Auditor. CIG is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, and is formed of members of each department's management team. A system which includes Directors' Assurance Statements has been

introduced to review governance systems and procedures; areas of non-compliance are considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement.

4.3 Statutory Officer Responsibilities

4.3.1 The Council Constitution, which is annually reviewed by the Monitoring Officer, sets out the responsibilities of both Members and senior managers. In particular the Council has identified the three statutory posts as follows:-

- Head of Paid Service - Chief Executive
- Chief Financial Officer - Director of Finance
- Monitoring Officer - Director of Law, HR & Asset Management

4.3.2 The Council has designated the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management as the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer has a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure its aims and principles are given full effect and report to Cabinet annually.

4.3.3 The Council has designated the Director of Finance as Chief Finance Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The financial management of the Authority is conducted in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules set out in the Constitution.

4.3.4 The Council continues to assess how its overall corporate governance responsibilities are discharged. In particular the Council has adopted the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance Framework, has developed a local Code of Corporate Governance and is working towards the National Good Governance Standard.

4.4 Audit and Risk Management Committee

4.4.1 The Council has an Audit and Risk Management Committee, which oversees various financial matters, the Terms of Reference for which comply with latest Cipfa guidelines.

4.5 Standards Committee

4.5.1 The Council has a Standards Committee, which deals with matters relating to the conduct of Councillors, employees, complaints and probity issues, the Terms of Reference for which comply with latest guidelines from the Standards Board for England.

4.6 Internal Control

4.6.1 The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control reflects best practice guidance identified by the CIPFA Finance Advisory Network and is informed by:

- Directorate assurance based on management information, performance information, officer assurance statements and Scrutiny Committee reports;
- the work undertaken by Wirral Internal Audit during the year;
- the work undertaken by the external auditor reported in their Annual Audit and Inspection Letter;
- Other work undertaken by independent inspection bodies.

4.7 Internal Audit

4.7.1 The arrangements for the provision of internal audit are contained within the Financial Regulations included within the Constitution. The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting and other systems of internal control as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006. The internal audit provision is managed by the Chief Internal Auditor and, as verified by the Audit Commission, operates in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2006.

4.7.2 From the work undertaken in 2008/09 the Chief Internal Auditor was able to provide 'reasonable assurance' on the key areas of risk management, corporate governance and financial control.

4.8 External Audit

4.8.1 Wirral Internal Audit is subject to regular inspection by the external auditors who place reliance on the work carried out by the internal auditors and indicate in their most recent review that "internal audit provide an effective service that makes a good contribution to the control environment of the Council". The Audit Commission through its Inspectorate functions also reviews compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations within their remit.

5. Significant Governance Issues

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Internal Audit has concluded that, based on the work undertaken, overall throughout the Council there are sound systems of internal control in place. However, improvements in the internal control environment can always be made and reports have been produced and discussed with Chief Officers and Members during the year that recommend appropriate actions to be taken within an agreed timescale to address weaknesses and improve

systems of control in key areas. The following improvement opportunities have been brought to our attention as part of the review of governance.

5.2 Governance and Values

5.2.1 Governance

The Council will continue to improve its Corporate Governance including:

- the implementation of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework via the Corporate Governance and Corporate Improvement Groups;
- the implementation of a revised Code of Corporate Governance;
- raising awareness and understanding.

5.3.1 Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity is a key element of the Council Plan and through equality impact assessments the Council has identified a number of priority actions to improve ways for people, particularly young people, hard to reach and disengaged groups to communicate with and influence the Council, tackling the causes of community unrest. We have committed to achieving the Equality Standard Level 3: a Peer Review is imminent.

5.3.2 Whistle Blowing

Following an internal governance review and subsequent comments by the Audit Commission a revised Confidential Reporting (Whistle Blowing) Policy has been prepared for the Council that has been widely publicised on the Internet site, the local Intranet and through the staff team briefing and Key Issue Exchange processes. An Action Plan to enhance awareness and monitor effectiveness has been agreed and is being implemented.

5.3.3 Single Status

The Council has partially completed the Single Status Review, and is expecting to complete the review during 2009: the Council has made financial provision.

5.4 Risk Management

The Council has completed significant work to implement the Risk Management Framework within all departments to ensure that risks are identified and appropriate actions taken by relevant individuals to mitigate risks. Consequently, the Council has been assessed against the CIPFA five point Risk Maturity Model as 'Risk Defined' and improving; this is a good mid point score that acknowledges the nature of the work that has been undertaken to date. Further developments are scheduled and will be completed to ensure that the infrastructure remains in place to embed risk management further into the culture of the organisation.

5.5 Partnership Working

5.5.1 The Council continues to be actively involved in developing the way it works with partners and organises itself to deliver services. Developments are continuing in this area to update the partnership register and clarify the legal status all of the partnerships identified and the applicability of Council Codes of Conduct to partners. The Council is developing a Partnership Toolkit.

5.5.2 The Council is developing a Sustainable Community Strategy through Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to bring together shared objectives.

5.6 Change Programme

5.6.1 The Council has committed to an ambitious Change Programme to improve the quality of service and meet users' needs within approved resources. The Council recognises that change on the scale envisaged represents both significant opportunities and risks, and therefore requires formal governance processes to ensure objectives are achieved and that the resources of the Council are co-ordinated to maximum advantage. The Council will manage all significant change programmes within this process, including:

- Strategic Asset Review
- Customer Service (including the Access to Services Review)
- Information Communications Strategic Developments
- Review of Common Administrative Processes
- Adult Social Services Transformation
- Building Schools for the Future

5.7 Information and Data Security

5.7.1 The Council has recently updated its ICT Security Policy to reflect both the changes in the structure of ICT delivery across the Council and significant developments in the use of the following:

- Broadband Communications
- Agile Working
- Increased Volume and Sensitivity of Data
- Corporate Change Programme
- Government Connect Initiative

5.7.2 The Council will promote the revised policy. Additionally, work is currently taking place to develop policies and procedures regarding the transfer of data and the use of removable media within the Council and with external partners to include periodic risk assessments of these arrangements and more effective guidance and training for the workforce.

6. Conclusion

6.1 We propose over the coming year to take any necessary steps to ensure that all of the above matters are addressed as appropriate to enhance our governance arrangements further. Many improvement actions represent work already in progress. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chief Executive

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Leader of the Council

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

RISK AND RETURN - ENGLISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE ICELANDIC BANKS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report summarises the key messages from the Audit Commission report Risk and Return - English Local Authorities and the Icelandic Banks. It takes the recommendations of the report and evaluates how Wirral performs against each of them. Finally, it restates the background to the £2 million investment with Heritable Bank and updates Members on the latest news from the Bank Administrators.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 On 26 March 2009 the Audit Commission published a report on treasury management in Local Authorities in light of the economic downturn and the deposits tied up in Icelandic banks. In total 127 English Local Authorities have deposits of more than £953 million with Icelandic banks.

2.2 Before I summarise the key messages of the Audit Commission report it is important to understand why Local Authorities, and in particular Wirral Council, has money available to make investments.

2.3 The money that the Council invests is money that has been allocated for a particular need but is not necessarily needed today. Examples of the type of money that the Council has available for investments are:

- Grants received from the Government to fund Council services that are not required immediately.

- Reserves which are set aside for future spending plans or as a contingency against future funding requirements. Examples of the types of reserves the Council has:
 - Insurance Fund - money set aside to cover the cost of third party claims which are pending but yet to be settled or for future claims which may be made against the Council.
 - Schools Balances - money set aside by individual schools to fund future plans.
 - Capital Receipts - money received from the sale of Council assets which will be used to fund future capital schemes.
- Money borrowed for capital schemes in advance of need - if the Council is planning a large capital project over the next few years it is prudent to borrow the money to fund the project at a time when interest rates are low which is not necessarily when the money is needed for the project.

2.4 All the money which is received by the Council is not necessarily spent on the first day of the year but rather is spent on Council services throughout the financial year. Rather than just leaving money in the current account I invest the money until it is required so that it can earn interest for the Council. In this way the Council maximises the benefits of the money it receives to help fund Council services and lower the Council Tax requirement.

3. KEY MESSAGES FROM THE AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT

3.1 The Audit Commission report gave five key messages on the investment activities of Local Authorities. These messages were:

1. Local Authorities have used interest from cash deposits as a valuable source of income.
2. The sums of money involved are large and invested widely. On 7 October 2008 451 Local Authorities had invested £31 billion, more than 40% of it overseas.
3. Almost 3.1% of all deposits were made in Icelandic banks. One hundred and twenty-seven Local Authorities held deposits, but delivery of services has not been affected.
4. Nationally the treasury management framework is broadly right but weaknesses in the detail have contributed to poor practice. In particular, there is little recognition that the risks associated with placing deposits with different banks may be highly correlated because they are in the same group, country or sector. Additionally, Government investment guidance gives too much weight to credit ratings at the expense of using a range of information sources.

5. Local treasury management arrangements vary. The best organisations balance risk and reward and arrangements include: regular review and scrutiny of policy and procedure: appropriately trained staff and engaged Elected Members; and the use of a wide range of information including, but not limited to, credit ratings.

4. CURRENT INVESTMENT POLICIES

4.1 The Audit Commission found that the majority of Councils had acted properly in managing their investments and were alert to the risks. Wirral Council was visited as part of their study and is considered to have acted properly.

4.2 Their report did however make a number of specific recommendations for Local Authorities to help strengthen investment policies and further limit the risk of exposure to any future banking failures. By taking each of the recommendations in turn current investment policies can be assessed.

4.3 Recommendation 1

4.3.1 ***Set the treasury management framework so that the organisation is explicit about the level of risk it accepts and the balance between security and liquidity and the yield to be achieved. At the highest level, the organisation should decide whether it has:***

- ***Appetite and capability to be able to manage risk by placing funds with financial institutions; or***
- ***No appetite and/or insufficient capability to manage the risk of placing funds in the market, and should instead place funds with the UK government's Debt Management Office;***

4.3.2 Each year I report to Cabinet to set out the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy (Cabinet 19 March 2009 for the latest strategy statement). This report states that the general policy objective is to invest surplus funds prudently. The investment priorities are; the security and liquidity of the invested capital and to generate an optimum yield which is commensurate with security and liquidity.

4.3.3 Strict minimum credit criteria are defined for counterparties with whom the Council will invest and these criteria have recently been tightened in light of the economic uncertainty. During the last quarter of 2008, when great economic uncertainty existed, the Council did take the decision to only invest funds with the Government Debt Management Office until the situation became more stable. This is just one example of how the Treasury Management Team, with the help of external advisers Arlingclose, constantly assesses risk and makes changes to activities, when necessary, to safeguard taxpayers money. Over the past three years the Treasury Management Team has generated approximately £12m of income from investments.

4.4 **Recommendation 2**

4.4.1 ***Ensure that treasury management policies:***

- ***Follow the revised CIPFA code of practice***
- ***Are scrutinised in detail by a specialist committee, usually the audit committee, before accepted by the authority***
- ***Are monitored regularly***

4.4.2 The Council has always adhered to the CIPFA code of practice and will continue to adhere to any revisions that CIPFA may propose following the Audit Commission report.

4.4.3 The treasury management and investment strategy statement is reported to Cabinet each year for approval.

4.4.4 Treasury Management activities are monitored regularly by officers and a quarterly monitoring report forms part of the General Financial Matters report taken to the Finance and Best Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.5 **Recommendation 3**

4.5.1 ***Ensure elected members receive regular updates on the full range of risks being run***

4.5.2 As stated above, every quarter the General Financial Matters report, taken to the Finance and Best Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee, includes updated details on the Treasury Management activities. A Treasury Management Annual report is reported to Cabinet at the end of each financial year summarising the annual performance.

4.6 **Recommendation 4**

4.6.1 ***Ensure that the treasury management function is appropriately resourced, commensurate with risks involved. Staff should have the right skills and have access to information and external advice.***

4.6.2 The Treasury Management Team consists of a CIPFA qualified accountant, a CIPFA finalist and two qualified Accounting Technicians.

4.6.3 Each member of the Team attends internal training courses on treasury management as well as courses organised by CIPFA and Arlingclose.

4.6.4 Each of the Team can speak to Arlingclose at any time for advice and all of the Team receive the Arlingclose e-mails with notification of any economic or financial changes which may require changes to investment activities.

4.6.5 The achievements of the Treasury Management Team in 2008 were also recognised by the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) who awarded the Group Accountant the title of Investment Officer of the year.

4.7 **Recommendation 5**

4.7.1 ***Train those elected members of authorities who have accountability for the stewardship of public money so that they are able to scrutinise effectively and be accountable for treasury management function***

4.7.2 Members receive financial training when they are first elected which includes an overview of the treasury management activities. Treasury management training for Members is included as part of the Finance training course for Members which I provide annually.

4.8 **Recommendation 6**

4.8.1 ***Ensure that the full range of options for managing funds is considered and note that early repayment of loans, or not borrowing money ahead of need, may reduce risks***

4.8.2 The Treasury Management Team, through meetings with Arlingclose, attendance at CIPFA courses and monitoring of all relevant marketing information, ensures that all options for managing funds are considered. It should also be noted that the current borrowing strategy has been to avoid borrowing money ahead of need, to limit the amount of money that is available for investment and thereby reduce risk.

4.9 **Recommendation 7**

4.9.1 ***Use the fullest range of information before deciding where to deposit funds***

4.9.2 The Council does not solely rely on credit ratings as a means of assessing the security of investments. The Council also takes into account information on corporate developments, market sentiment towards investment counterparties and any other advice at its disposal. This fact was demonstrated by the move away from investments in Icelandic Banks after December 2007 even though for most of 2008 Icelandic Banks retained a strong credit rating and received favourable press coverage.

4.10 **Recommendation 8**

4.10.1 ***Be clear about the role of external advisors and recognise that local authorities remain accountable for decisions made;***

4.10.2 The Treasury Management Team is clear about the relationship it has with the external advisors. Arlingclose provides market and economic expertise and information to help inform decisions.

4.11 **Recommendation 9**

4.11.1 ***Look for economies of scale by sharing resources between authorities or with pension funds, while maintaining separation of those funds.***

4.11.2 The Treasury Management Team and the Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) regularly communicate and share information and ideas about investment activity. MPF is an important and valued source of information and one which the Team will continue to use. I continue to look at ways in which sharing resources can create benefits but the practical differences in the types of business undertaken by the General Fund and the MPF and the varied cashflows will always dictate the separation of the funds.

5. HERITABLE BANK

5.1 On 30 November 2007 the Council invested £2 million with Heritable Bank, a UK bank but a subsidiary of the Icelandic bank Landsbanki. The investment was a fixed term deposit for a period (or term) of 364 days paying an interest rate of 6.22%. At the time Heritable Bank was rated as 'A' by the credit ratings agency Fitch and was on the approved list of counterparties. The investment was also within the limit for investments with a single institution of £15M.

5.2 Following the appointment of Arlingclose a revised counterparty list was drawn up on 12 December 2007 which removed all Icelandic related banks from the approved counterparty list. This decision was taken despite Icelandic Banks retaining a high credit rating and paying attractive rates of return.

5.3 On 7 October 2008 Heritable Bank entered Administration, 52 days before the £2 million investment was due to mature on 28 November 2008. The Council has since submitted an insolvency claim to the Administrator of Heritable Bank, Ernst and Young.

5.4 Ernst & Young, has begun the process of identifying and recovering assets and reimbursing the banks creditors, of which Wirral Council is one. It has reported that the assets exceed the liabilities and has forecast that a material dividend will be payable in the near future. It is hoped that during April a report will be produced that will give more definitive information about the amount and/or timing of dividend payments. At this stage I remain confident that the £2million investment will be returned.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Wirral Council has acted, and continues to act, prudently and properly in all its investment activities. The recommendations proposed by the Audit Commission have already been undertaken at Wirral Council.

6.2 The Treasury Management Team adds immense value to the Council both in financial terms, by enhancing investment income and in non financial terms, through the strengthening of control procedures. The findings of the Audit Commission and the success at the LGC awards in 2008 provide clear independent evidence of the excellent work.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Approval and implementation of any recommendations following the Audit Commission report will further limit financial risks.

8. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are none arising out of this report.

9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are none arising out of this report.

10. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are none arising out of this report.

11. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising out of this report.

12. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

12.1. There are none arising out of this report.

13. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

13.1. There are none arising out of this report.

14. SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are none arising out of this report.

15. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are none arising out of this report.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 Risk and Return: English Local Authorities and the Icelandic Banks – Audit Commission, March 2009.

16.2 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2009 to 2012 – March 2009

16.3 Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services – CIPFA 2002

17. RECOMMENDATION

- 17.1 That Members note the Audit Commission conclusion that the Council acted, and continues to act, properly in the management of its investments.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/85/09

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Cabinet – 23rd April 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/ DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

Economic Update

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides a summary update to members on the impact of the current recession on Wirral's economy, as requested by Cabinet on 19th March 09.

1.2 Members are asked to:

- i.) Note the contents of this update report.

2. Key Indicators

2.1. 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 level or lower. Furthermore, much of the data has a significant time lag – thereby not accurately reflecting more recent worsening conditions. Finally, where possible, this report only uses data that has been updated since the previous Cabinet report (19th March 09). Notwithstanding that, the following is a summary of key indicators:

- **Employment rate** - Latest data for June 08¹ indicates that Wirral's overall Employment Rate has decreased by 2.1% points from its December 2007 position of 71.4% to 69.3%.
- **Worklessness** - Latest Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant count data to February 2009 indicates that Wirral's rate now stands at 5.1%.² This represents 9,265 total claimants. In terms of people moving onto or off JSA in

¹ Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

² Source: ONS Claimant Count

February 09, the data shows an off-flow of 2,066. This compares to the January 09 number of 1,175. Numbers of people coming on to JSA for February were 2,837. This is an increase from the January figure of 1,872.

- **Job Vacancies** - February 09 figures show a slight increase in the number of Wirral vacancies notified to Job Centre Plus (JCP) which may reflect seasonal fluctuations.

Table 2: Vacancies Notified to JCP (Wirral)

Aug 08	Sept 08	Oct 08	Nov 08	Dec 08	Jan 09	Feb 09
1,919	890	1,290	1,739	969	447	613

Source: NOMIS, JCP summary analysis

- **Job Density** – latest data from 2006 indicates that Wirral’s job density is 6.8.³ This means that there are 68 jobs for every 100 working age people. This is an increase from the previous year’s rate (2005) which was 6.1
- **Redundancies** - Analysis of HR1⁴ redundancy notifications provided by Jobcentre Plus has demonstrated a relatively high volume of redundancies in the borough. In 2007/08, 5 employers notified a total of 1051 redundancies (821 of these were attributable to job losses at Burtons). Analysis of HR1s from April 2008 to January 09 shows a further 20 employers notifying an additional 942 job losses.
- **Impact on local businesses** - Tulip Foods in Bromborough recently confirmed the closure of the plant with over 300 job losses. Cammell Laird announced up to 200 redundancies in March 09.

³ Source: ONS Job Density 2006

⁴ Definition of HR1 notifications: employers are required by law to notify of a proposal to dismiss 20 or more employees as redundant at one establishment. Please note the final number of redundancies may be higher or lower than the number given.

- **Feedback from businesses** - Businesses are still indicating an overall reduction in demand for goods and services, with lower consumer demand cascading through supply chains. Cash and finance are the most urgent concerns. In relation to staffing, there is some evidence that businesses are reluctant to let skilled and committed staff go but are faced with reduced demand impacts.

Businesses from across the borough benefited from a 'Boost your Business' event at the Floral Pavilion, held on 25th and 26th of March. The event aimed to inform the borough's business community of the support available to them during the current economic climate. Invest Wirral - the Council's business support and investment team - have produced a brochure with a breakdown of all of the support agencies that can help as well as their contact details. Feedback from the event has been positive – for example one company has reported a saving in excess of £6,000 in business rates as a result of advice from the event.

3. Wirral Response

- 3.1 Wirral partners are taking forward a co-ordinated and coherent response to the economic situation. 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.
- 3.2. The Council and its partners are currently in discussion as to the best ways to support Wirral residents and businesses in the current situation. Monthly meetings continue between the Council and business leaders. In addition - as members are aware from previous reports - a structured package of support to businesses is being developed and should be opening later this month.

- 3.3 Providing co-ordinated redundancy support - Key partners (Wirral Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council) co-ordinate activity through the Wirral Economic Development and Skills (WEDS) Partnership.
- 3.4 Through Working Wirral, the Council provides a number of commissioned activities and development services across the Borough to help improve local people's skills and employment prospects.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. **Apprenticeships** - Further to the Budget resolution, Officers are exploring the options for the development of an apprenticeship programme for the borough, with access to all vocational areas. Apprenticeships will support the council and its partners to continue tackling worklessness and skills issues by offering support within a structured apprentice programme. A separate report will be considered by members at this cabinet meeting (23rd April 09).

4. Financial Implications

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

5. Staffing Implications

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

6. Equal Opportunities Information

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

7. Community Safety Implications

- 7.1. None as a result of this report

8. Local Agenda 21 Implications

8.1. None as a result of this report

9. Planning Implications

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

10. Anti-Poverty Implications

10.1. None as a result of this result

11. Human Rights Implications

11.1 None as a result of this result

12. Social Inclusion Implications

12.1. None as a result of this report

13. Local Member Support Implications

13.1. None as a direct result of this report

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to:

- i.) Note the contents of this update report.

J. WILKIE

Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services

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

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

PROPOSALS FOR THE REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the proposed Governance Review of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) in accordance with the requirements of the new Local Transport Act and seeks endorsement for the proposed Study Brief and Reporting/Management Arrangements for the Review outlined in this report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Transport Act (LTA), was enacted in November 2008. It has three primary aims:-
 - a) allow changes to the way local bus services are planned and operated;
 - b) give local authorities the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport; and
 - c) update existing legal powers so that, where local areas wish to develop proposals for local road pricing schemes, they have the freedom and flexibility to do so in a way that best meets local needs – whilst ensuring schemes are consistent and interoperable.
- 1.2 At the time of enactment, the existing Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority (MPTA), became the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority (ITA), reflecting the Department for Transport (DfT) belief that they should have a more overarching role in the planning and delivery across all modes of transport, and take over sole responsibility for the third Local Transport Plan, (LTP) due to be implemented from April 2011. This replaced the former arrangements where the LTP in metropolitan areas was a shared responsibility between the PTA and the Local Authorities.
- 1.3 In order to ensure that the ITA is fit for purpose and suited to local circumstances so that it can take on its enhanced role, the Act allows for a comprehensive review of governance of the ITA and how Halton delivers its highway and transportation functions. This has been agreed by Leaders and the ITA; the Transport Working Group (TWG), has been tasked on behalf of Leaders to manage the review.

2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 Attached as Annexe One is the agreed review brief. It has been agreed that the review will be undertaken by Atkins Consulting based on the level of expertise they have built up in other City Regions. The contract will be let by the Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive (MPTE).
- 2.2 Attached as Annexe Two is a report agreed by TWG as the reporting arrangements for the review.
- 2.3 All current best estimates suggest a period of two years from start to implementing the recommendations of the review. Although DfT are insistent they will employ a 'light touch', nevertheless there are stringent requirements particularly in terms of the level of consultation required and some recommendations may require additional legislation to implement.
- 2.4 At a special joint meeting with DfT, held on 27 January, a number of important issues were clarified:-
 - a) Ministers were anxious to be seen to be making progress on the LTA and areas undertaking governance reviews should seek to make early progress;
 - b) Whilst recognising that there may be impositions on DfT's workload, it was not envisaged this would cause major delays; and
 - c) Where reviews required legislation to fully implement the agreed proposals, there was no reason why shadow arrangements could not be put in place immediately in order for the reformed ITA to undertake the duties required of it. This should help with concerns over ITA responsibility for LTP3.

3. SECURING AGREEMENT

- 3.1 Proceeding with the review will be dependent upon the agreement of the ITA, City Region Cabinet, and individual Local Authorities. At its meeting of 19 March, the ITA agreed the brief attached as Annexe One. It is anticipated that timescales for agreements by Local Authorities will mean the review can be started in mid to late May.
- 3.2 Reporting arrangements thereafter will be as set in Annexe Two.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the consultant's commission will be in the region of £120k of which there is a £70k contribution from NWDA, and the remaining £50k to be found from Merseytravel and the City Region Local Authorities. Of this £50k

Local Authority contribution, Wirral's contribution to be funded from the LTP will be in the region of £5k.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

6. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

9. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

10. SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

11. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications under this heading.

12. ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

There are no direct implications under this heading.

13. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

This report has implications for all Wards.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is requested to:

- i) Note the proposed Governance Review of the Merseyside ITA in accordance with the requirements of the new Local Transport Act;
- ii) Endorse the proposed Study Brief and Reporting/Management Arrangements for the Review outlined in this report.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR TECHNICAL SERVICES

Annexe One

**Final Version
20 March 2009**

Liverpool City Region

**Proposed governance review for transport
Study Brief**

Introduction

1. The Liverpool City Region, (LCR), wishes to undertake a comprehensive review of current arrangements for the governance and management of its transport functions. This is within the context of the Local Transport Act (LTA), and wider changes being made within the overall governance of the City Region.

The Liverpool City Region

2. This proposal is being issued on behalf of the Merseyside Transport Partnership, (MTP) and Halton Borough Council. The MTP is currently made up of the five Merseyside local authorities, Liverpool City Council and the District Councils of Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral, and Merseytravel, which is the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority and Passenger Transport Executive for Merseyside.
3. Both Merseyside and Halton LTP's are rated excellent for both the quality of the current LTP, and for delivery of the first LTP. In addition, acting jointly, the MTP and Halton have been awarded Beacon status for work on accessibility.
4. Although there are two separate LTP's, the MTP and Halton coordinate activities at officer and Member level.
5. This arrangement is mirrored at the wider City Region level, where shadow City Region Cabinet arrangements are now in place. It is proposed that the Cabinet should be formally constituted and operational in Autumn 2009.
6. In January 2009 the City Region signed the first stage of the Multi Area Agreement, (MAA). A second stage, embracing transport, economy and housing will be submitted in June 2009.

The Transport Working Group

7. The City Region has so far decided that there will be six main Platforms under the Cabinet. Transport is one of these. Within the

Page 2

current arrangements, each portfolio is led by a Cabinet Member supported by a Chief Executive. Under the current shadow arrangements, the transport platform is led by Halton.

8. In anticipation of the Local Transport Bill, City Region Leaders agreed the establishment of a Transport Working Group, (TWG) to begin examining potential new governance arrangements. This is co-Chaired by the Chief Executives of Halton and Merseytravel. The Terms of Reference and Membership of TWG are contained in Annexe One.
9. Beside the two LTP's described above, the TWG has a working draft City Region Transport Vision and Strategy, which has been endorsed by Leaders. It is also taking responsibility for the transport elements of the proposed City Region Multi Area Agreement, (MAA) which is due to be agreed in June 2009.
10. The TWG is the commissioner of this brief and will act as the Steering Group for the work. This is described in greater detail later in this brief. The Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive will act as the partnership's accountable body for contractual purposes.

Work already undertaken

11. The TWG has undertaken an internal review of possible governance arrangements and has examined emerging proposals from other Metropolitan areas.
12. Leaders have agreed the following as an interim position, pending the full review.
 - (i) An Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) should be established building on the existing PTA.
 - (ii) The ITA to consist of 20 LA Members (18 allocated to the 5 LAs currently members of the PTA as per the current PTA allocations plus two from Halton).
 - (iii) Scrutiny of the ITA would be through the City Region Cabinet and the new LCR Scrutiny Board to be established under the City Region Prospectus. (The LCR Scrutiny Board to consist of elected members from all 6 LA's led by the Scrutiny Chairs from across the LCR – details to be confirmed).
 - (iv) From time to time Stakeholders will be co-opted onto the LCR Scrutiny Panel.

The proposed review

13. The LTA presents new opportunities to English local authorities outside London to improve the governance of transport, and hence to improve the provision of transport services to all who use and depend upon them every day. In considering governance arrangements it is important to base the work on a clear view of the broader objectives and priorities for the improvement of the area. In particular, how transport can be planned and managed in a way which best supports sustainable economic growth.
14. We are determined that new governance arrangements are based firmly on the principle of form following function.

General principles for the review

15. It will be clear from the foregoing that the LCR has made considerable progress in examining potential governance arrangements for transport. In addition new wider governance arrangements for the City Region are well advanced. The starting point for this review is therefore:-
 - (i) The powers contained within the LTA are well understood and do not require any further in depth analysis;
 - (ii) Wider City Region governance arrangements are established and transport's place within those broadly understood;
 - (iii) The Local Authorities and the ITA have produced a range of potential options for detailed examination within the context of i) and ii) above; and
 - (iv) In addition to the particular demands made within this brief, the work should be carried out within the context of the DfT's 'Guidance on Governance Reviews and the Publication of Governance Schemes'. (DfT Dec 2008).

NB In relation to 15 iii) above, the TWG have produced a Discussion Model. This is attached as Annexe Two and is referred to more fully in paragraph 29 below.

16. In setting out the key functions of the review, the over riding concern is to ensure that it is acknowledged as independent and transparent, and that its findings will be examined by a broad range of stakeholders. It is therefore critical that a step by step process establishes a knowledge base for final decision making. We will expect a clear framework for consultation to be set out at the earliest stage of the review. This should take account of the DfT guidance and any subsequent discussions with DfT and GONW on likely requirements in this area.
17. The Review should take the draft LCR Transport Vision and Strategy, along with the emerging MAA, and ensure a 'read across' between the two sets of proposals. The Liverpool City Region Development Plan

and Merseyside Action Plan are additional strategic frameworks that need to be taken account of in undertaking the Review.

Proposed phasing of the Review

18. The proposal is broken down into three stages identified in the DfT guidance.
- Stage One: problem analysis and identification of objectives
 - Stage Two: identification and assessment of options
 - Stage Three: conclusions and recommendations

Stage One - problem analysis and identification of objectives

The LCR context

19. This phase will establish a clear understanding of the context for transport within the LCR. It will affirm the aims and objectives for transport within the context of :-
- (i) The LTP's and Progress Reports
 - (ii) Draft LCR Transport Vision and Strategy
 - (iii) LCR Development Plan and Merseyside Action Plan,
 - (iv) MAA, and LAAs
 - (v) North West Operational Programme
 - (vi) National priorities;
 - (vii) Regional strategies does this include Northern Way?
 - (viii) Future challenges emerging from guidance on LTP3, Delivering a Sustainable Transport System,'(DaSTS) Regional Strategy and other relevant guidance or legislation.
 - (ix) The Merseytravel Best Value Performance Plan.

Current delivery arrangements

20. This will examine the current delivery arrangements for implementation of policy and programmes taking account of;-
- (i) The respective responsibilities of the ITA/PTE and LA's.
 - (ii) The existing situation in Halton which is a single transport authority covering all aspects of transport.
 - (iii) How the current provision of two LTP's impacts on serving a single LCR.
 - (iv) The strengths and weaknesses of delivering transport, highway and traffic functions/services via the different authorities.

- (v) Examine the links between transport and land use planning and the current divisions in responsibilities and potential weaknesses in the Merseyside system, as opposed to the perceived strength of the unitary system in Halton.
- 21. At this stage there should be an acknowledgement of the issues surrounding the possible extension of ITA/PTE operations into Halton.
- 22. A particular concern in this element of the work will be to address the issue of the current 'excellent' status of the two LTP's and clearly establish the rationale for any change given that status.

Current governance arrangements

- 23. This phase will examine the current arrangements for managing policy and implementation it will examine;
 - (i) The current operational structure of Merseytravel, taking account of the responsibilities of the ITA and PTE;
 - (ii) Current operational structures of the Merseyside local authorities in terms of transport responsibilities;
 - (iii) The current operational structure of Halton taking account of its responsibilities as a joint highways and transport authority;
 - (iv) Taking account of the above the respective roles of the ITA, PTE and LA's in policy, planning and implementation.
 - (v) Current joint working arrangements including the role of the Local Transport Plan Coordination Group, (LTPCG) and Merseyside Strategic Transport and Engineering Group, (MSTEG).
 - (vi) The relationship of the transport management arrangements to the wider City Region LA structure including Regeneration, Chief Executives, and shadow City Region Cabinet.
 - (vii) The relationship with wider City Region bodies such as the Sub Regional Partnership, (SRP), Local Strategic Partnerships, (LSP) and regional bodies;
 - (viii) The role of the Merseyside Strategic Transportation and Planning Committee, (MSTPC) in relation to the above.
 - (ix) The role of other key stakeholders involved in both the maintenance of the asset and use of the asset including

Improvement of the asset – public realm
Management of the asset - road safety; NRSWA; Highways
Development Control, (DC); Traffic Management events/
coordination; parking; co-ordinating utilities work.

Use of the asset – Bus operators; rail- Merseyrail and national;
Highways Agency, (HA Airport; Port and; freight.)

- (x) It must also consider connectivity/linkages with other policy areas including, housing; planning; quality of life (neighbourhoods agenda and quality of life); economic growth; and, health.

Funding

- 24. Within the context of wider considerations, current transport funding arrangements, for both capital and revenue in terms of accountability and funding flows should be examined. Account must also be taken of proposals for the Integrated Transport and Maintenance blocks to become part of the Regional Funding Allocation, (RFA), and what these arrangements may have on any proposals arising from this review.

Potential geographic extent of the LCR

- 25. Account should be taken of possible extensions to the current LCR boundaries into Cheshire, Lancashire and potentially, having influence over LCR's travel to work area, extending into North East Wales. We would anticipate discussion on these issues being evidenced by current travel to work patterns in the LCR. In the first instance possible extensions should be confined to consideration of LA's invited to be associate members of the LCR, Cabinet Details are contained within Annexe Two.

Stage One Conclusions and options for stage two

- 26. Completion of the four phases identified above will mark the completion of Stage One. Discussion and decisions reached on issues identified in this stage will form the platform for Stage Two.
- 27. Stage One will have:-
 - (i) Gained a full understanding of current governance and delivery mechanisms, including those between the transport sector and wider LCR structures and governance;
 - (ii) Identified the key LCR priorities,
 - (iii) Identified strengths of the current system;
 - (iv) Identified weaknesses where the system can be improved;

- (v) Against this analysis, recommend a set of prioritised objectives against which proposals for change may be evaluated to ensure transport delivers against LCR requirements.
 - (vi) Make recommendations for Stage Two that set out the critical features that revised governance arrangements will deliver.
28. Debate and agreement at this stage, with a wide range of stakeholders will be crucial in determining the next stage.

Stage Two - Identification and assessment of options

What is required to achieve the LCR transport objectives.

29. Stage one will have established the agreed transport objectives and the context within the wider LCR priorities. As well as the strengths and weaknesses of the current methods of transport delivery this phase examines the best ways to plan, manage and implement transport strategy, policy and plans. This will require analysis of both governance and support structures. It will examine the options already identified in the Discussion Model and set these alongside the objectives identified from Stage One.
30. A clear analysis of how each option performs in terms of meeting the objectives agreed in Stage One will be required. This will include a detailed assessment of costs associated with each, taking account of the most effective support systems required for each option.
31. Examination of the possible role of the ITA becoming Highway Authority and an assessment of the implications that this could have in relation to the land use planning system. Conversely, this should also assess the land use planning implications of the ITA's transport powers passing to the district councils or to (an) alternative body(ies). This element should also assess the value of the ITA's "power of direction" provision outlined within the LTA, from both an infrastructure planning potential and a planning development control perspective.
32. Depending on examination of issues such as the potential geographic reach of the LCR, recommendations on a phased or incremental approach may be required. This will also apply to the form of the ITA set out below.
33. Stakeholder debate will be required throughout this stage.

What governance arrangements follow from this analysis

34. Based on analysis set out above, this phase examines the preferred options for the form, membership and constitution of the ITA. This should take account of any need for an incremental approach based around possible future changes in area covered.

35. This phase will need to take account of the developing wider City Region governance and requirements emerging from the City Region Cabinet. The relationship between the ITA and City Region Cabinet, and other City Region Boards must be clearly examined and clear lines of authority and communication established.
36. The review must take account of the proposals to facilitate more formal sub -regional collaboration through the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, (LDEDC); this provides the means to establish a formal Economic Prosperity Board, (EPB), The shadow City Region Cabinet have indicated that they wish pursue a model of statutory sub-regional governance. The potential implications for this in terms of the ITA should be examined.
37. The role of scrutiny within this framework will be important. Particular reference to the current role of MSTPC will be needed at this stage.
38. There will be a particular need to examine any implications arising from the Merseyside MAA. This will not relate solely to the final set of proposals that may be set out in the MAA, but also the lessons learned from the overall MAA process, in terms of how transport at the City Region level can best be stitched into the wider policy agenda, at a working level, and at City Region Board level. This will need to take account of the responsibilities of the other Boards in terms of ensuring transport implications of their proposals are accurately reflected.
39. In examining the above, account must be taken of the prospects set out in the SNR and reiterated in the letter from Government sent on 22 December, 2008, ' Pre Budget Report: City Regions', setting out the criteria, for the establishment of Economic Prosperity Boards, for the City Region. This proposition holds out the possibility of such a body absorbing the ITA's role and responsibilities. Full details of this and the City Region response are attached as Annexe Three.
40. The Review must take full account of the implications of these proposals and offer recommendations in terms of future transport governance. This is a critical stage of the Review, and close adherence to the DfT guidance is required. In particular we would expect the following:-
 - (i) The implications of the ITA taking responsibility for developing policies and planning leading to LTP3 –The DfT Guidance paragraph 5.33 notes the 'statutory duty' to implement the policies of the ITA. We will require a full understanding as to the best means to make this happen in practice. There are two particular implications that will need examination:-
 - (a) There are currently two LTP's covering the City Region.

Although there is an acceptance in principle of the advantages of a single LTP, the possible continuation of a separate LTP for Halton will need to be considered, including the working relationships with the ITA; and

- (b) There will need to be an in depth examination of the working arrangements between the ITA and the Highways Authority in areas such as the duties and responsibilities under the Traffic Management Act, (TMA), and how strategic networks may be defined and managed.
 - (ii) Within this context, the possible advantages of implementing proposals contained within paragraph 5.43 and 5.44 must be examined.
 - (iii) It follows that a critical examination of delivery of the ITA's proposals must also take account of the respective roles of the ITA and its PTE, as set out in paragraph 5.22 and 5.23 of the guidance. Issues arising from the District Audit report relating to the Merseyside report on the Merseytram governance arrangements will need to be taken account of here.
41. This detailed analysis will lead to clear recommendations on the proposed constitutional arrangements for the ITA. The review must also identify those recommendations for which it looks likely there will be a requirement for changes in legislation, and for which early engagement with the DfT is advised.
42. There will also be a need for recommendations for support and staffing arrangements, taking account of the analysis carried out above. The overall costs of options must be clearly spelt out.

Stage Two – conclusions and options for Stage Three

43. The end of this stage will:-
- (i) Provide a detailed assessment of best forms of delivery;
 - (ii) Based on the above a clear assessment of the best form for the ITA; and
 - (iii) Provide clear costs and benefits for the options chosen.
 - (iv)
44. Further stakeholder engagement will be required at this stage.

Stage Three – Conclusions and recommendations

45. This stage provides a final set of recommendations with full costs and benefits.

Stakeholder engagement

46. Extensive stakeholder engagement will be required. The DfT will produce guidance on this and this will be used to better inform this element of the work.

Timescales

47. There is a working assumption of 3 months per Stage. Within Stage One we anticipate agreement on the overall scope and structure of the review to be completed within the first two weeks.
48. There is a very strong emphasis on wide stakeholder involvement within this process; this will need particularly strong Member engagement. It is recognised that this requirement may well influence overall timescales and the timing of particular stages of the review. We would expect the Consultants experience from elsewhere to guide assumptions on likely timescales, and for early warning of potential delays during the Review itself.
49. However, TWG are anxious that the Review is completed as quickly as possible, and ideally by the end of 2009.

Governance Review; Suggested Sign Off Arrangements

Aim of Report

This report suggests arrangements for the 'sign-off' of recommendations that may emerge from the review of ITA governance.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting in February, 2009, TWG endorsed the process for agreeing the brief for the review of ITA governance. This is the subject of a separate report to TWG.
- 1.2 It has been agreed that as a general principle it will be assumed that the review had been commissioned by the Leaders Group, and its implementation and management delegated to TWG.
- 1.3 Some evidence from other City Regions suggests that an essential element of the management arrangements for such a review must be to agree transparent and robust sign off arrangements, in order to avoid possible confusion and/or conflict as recommendations arise from the review for endorsement and agreement.
- 1.4 This report sets out proposed sign- off arrangements for the review.

2. Proposal

2.1 The following principles are proposed

- (a) The review has been commissioned by the Leaders Group, with management delegated to TWG.
- (b) The review is supported by the ITA
- (c) TWG is seeking formal sign off to the review brief from the six local authorities, and the ITA.
- (d) The Consultants will report first to TWG, who will make recommendations to Leaders and the ITA
- (e) Leaders will make recommendations to the LAs

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- (f) Any differences will be resolved through the Leaders Group who will act as a Dispute Resolution Group.
- (g) Ultimately the final decision rests with the constituent bodies (namely the LAs and the ITA)

2.2 It is further proposed that MSTPC act as a wider Members Consultative Group supporting TWG in developing future proposals

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING AND REGENERATION ASSISTANCE POLICY

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Council's revised Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy following consultation .

1.2 If approved, this revised policy would be implemented with immediate effect.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 ("the RRO") gave Local Authorities the power to provide assistance to improve living conditions in their area. This assistance can be in any form and can include such things as advice about property improvements and financial assistance in the form of grants and/or loans. This power cannot be used unless a policy for the provision of such assistance has been adopted. Once adopted, the policy should be monitored, reviewed and amended (if necessary) to take into account changes in local circumstances and government policy. In this way, the policy should evolve over time to meet the needs and aspirations of Wirral residents. Any significant changes should be subject to consultation prior to being adopted and the public should be notified about any revised policy. In addition to the RRO, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 allows Local Authorities to give financial assistance to any person in order to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of an area. This power supports the use of products aimed at non-residential interests involved in regeneration activity connected to housing schemes. Related products involving non-housing interests are also included in the policy.

2.2 Wirral's current Private Sector Housing Renewal and Regeneration Assistance Policy was agreed by Cabinet on 3rd April 2008

2.3 On the 15th of January 2009 Cabinet agreed to undertake a consultation exercise in relation to proposed revisions to the Council's Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy. This report provides feedback on the completed consultation exercise and proposes that the revised policy be adopted.

3.0 CONSULTATION

3.1 The revised policy was subject to public consultation via the Council's website, local press and bespoke leaflets distributed largely via the Council's 'One Stop Shops'. No comments were received about the proposed revisions.

4.0 SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING POLICY

4.1 The revised policy can be accessed using the link below to the Council's website.

http://www.wirral.gov.uk/LGCL/100007/200077/content_0001990.html

4.1.1 A summary of the proposed revisions to the policy is provided below.

4.2 EXISTING ASSISTANCE

4.2.1 Wirral's policy is currently split into 3 distinct sections covering:

- Assistance for relocation (in connection with demolition schemes)
- Assistance for renovation
- Other (help for first time buyers, Handyperson Service etc.)

4.3 ASSISTANCE FOR RELOCATIONS

Equity Relocation Loans

4.3.1 Equity based relocation loans are available to both owner-occupiers and businesses. Currently, the limit for both loans is £35,000. However, in the case of relocation loans for owner-occupiers there is a opportunity to increase the loan to £45,000 if approved by the Newheartlands Discretionary Panel. In relation to HMRI new build schemes it is proposed by Newheartlands that the loan should be increased to £55,000 subject to the Discretionary Panel. The interest shown in the business relocation loan to date suggests that the £35,000 limit may be insufficient to close the financial gap between the compensation paid by the Council and the cost of a suitable, alternative, premises. In the current economic climate, and in order to assist businesses to move to meet HMRI objectives, it is proposed to increase the upper limit of the Business Relocation Loan to £45,000.

Business Movers Support

4.3.2 HMRI clearance schemes involving non-residential interests have different requirements to owner-occupiers and tenants, when moving premises. It is considered that there is a need for a specialist advisor to support the businesses (for example those in Church Road and the North End of Birkenhead) through the moving process, similar to the support provided by the Home Ownership Advisory Officers, for residential relocations.

4.3.3 It is proposed to develop a business mover's support service over the next few months with a view to introducing a specialist advisory service later this year. It is proposed to work with the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management and the Invest Wirral Team to design this service..

Relocation Rent Support (Business)

4.3.4 In relation to moving non-residential interests out of clearance schemes, an issue with rent affordability has been identified. In certain cases, where a non-residential tenant is renting accommodation, the rent paid can sometimes be below that of the market rent for a variety of reasons. Upon moving, the non-residential interest is likely to be faced with having to pay a market rent which may not be considered affordable to the proprietor.

4.3.5 It is proposed to introduce a new financial product to cushion the increase in rent for a limited period of time, allowing the non residential interest to adjust to the higher rent, or make alternative arrangements. This product is to be known as Relocation Rent Support and is in effect a "parachute" payment running over a 5 year period, with 100% gap funding provided in year 1, 80% in year 2 and so on until the support finishes at the end of year 5. An example is shown below:

4.3.6 Current rent paid: £300 per month
Market rent for similar premises elsewhere: £500 per month
Rental gap: £200 per month
Year 1 Relocation Rent Support: £200 per month
Year 2 RRS: £160 per month
Year 3 RRS: £120 per month
Year 4 RRS: £80 per month
Year 5 RRS: £40 per month
Total cost of RRS over the 5 year period: £7,200

4.3.7 It is proposed that this product will be provided by the local authority and will only be made available to non-residential interests relocating within Wirral.

4.4 ASSISTANCE FOR RENOVATION

Home Repair Assistance

4.4.1 Home Repair Assistance (HRA) provides up to £5,000 to qualifying residents throughout the borough to deal with a range of urgent minor work affecting the health and safety of the applicant. HRAs are registered as a local land charge and must be repaid when the property is sold. The current HRAs were introduced in April 2008 and, to date, 5 have been approved with 2 of these having been completed. In addition, 192 enquiries have been received about HRA assistance. It is envisaged that the number of approvals and completions will increase substantially by the year end. The maximum amount of assistance available through the HRA product has not changed for a number of years and inflation has eroded the ability to maximise the works that can be completed within this limit.

4.4.2 It is proposed to increase the limit of HRA to £6,000.

Equity Loan for Renewal

4.4.3 The Equity Renovation Loan was also introduced in April 2008 and a decision was taken to pilot these loans initially in the Egremont area of the HMRI. Expressions of interest were received from approximately 30 owner-occupiers and this has resulted in 6 applications being processed. Since the loan was introduced, a Framework for Equity Loans for Renewal has been agreed by the Newheartlands Monitoring and Implementation Group. This framework gives each local authority the discretion to increase the loan level beyond the limit of £30,000, in exceptional circumstances, on the understanding that this is agreed by Cabinet.

4.4.4 It is proposed that the Director of Regeneration be given the delegated authority to increase the loan above the £30,000 limit, to a maximum of £40,000, in cases where unforeseen works are encountered, in order to ensure the completion of works on site to a satisfactory standard, subject to the agreement of the loan agent (currently ART Homes Ltd), any mortgagor and the Independent Financial Advisor. In cases not approved by the loan agent, the mortgagor or the IFA, consideration can be given to the use of HRA to enable the completion of works on site. Should the use of a HRA not be agreed then delegated authority would be given for the Director of Regeneration to approve the use of a non-means tested grant to enable the completion of the works. The use of a grant to be considered as the last resort. It is envisaged that this situation will only arise in a very small number of cases.

Group Repair

4.4.5 Group Repair provides financial assistance to renovate the external fabric of a group of properties. Phase 4 of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme in North Birkenhead will be undertaken in 2009/10 and this is intended to be the final phase. Experience gained during the first 3 phases has identified a number of issues which need to be clarified to assist in the implementation of phase 4.

4.4.6 The clarifications include conditions relating to the payment of contributions upon practical completion of works to individual houses and the collection of any unpaid contribution.

4.4.7 In a very small number of cases on a Group Repair Scheme (which can be upward of 50 to 100 properties or more) a situation may arise where an owner of an individual property cannot fully complete the Group Repair application process before the works on that property have to commence under the original offer. Often this is just a timing issue related

to provision of information. Delaying the start of works on that property can entail the Council incurring costs under the contract. In these circumstances it is proposed that the Director of Regeneration be given delegated authority to authorise that works start on that individual property with (1) the owners consent, and (2) following the undertaking of a risk assessment to establish both the risks to the scheme as a whole and the financial risks to the Council.

Neighbourhood Facelift

4.4.8 This assistance is similar to Group Repair in that it facilitates the facelift of the external parts of a group of homes but also combines both environmental improvements within and beyond the curtilage and works to improve the interiors of the houses.

4.4.9 The suggested amendments to Group Repair above should also apply to the Facelift product.

Assistance for Empty Properties

4.4.10 A range of assistance is available and will continue to be developed to deal with empty properties.

4.4.11 To maximise the use of limited financial resources to tackle empty properties (which is an increasing issue in the Borough) it is proposed that Landlord properties that are part of a Group Repair Scheme (GRS) or Neighbourhood Facelift Scheme (NFS) do not receive a double financial benefit of the GRS or NFS and the Empty Property Assistance (up to £10,000).

4.4.12 The reason for this is that it is a condition of both the GRS and NFS that Landlords commit to let their property upon completion of the scheme. Therefore, if the property is vacant before the GRS and NFS take place it is the responsibility of the Landlord to undertake the internal improvements required to the property before letting it. The Landlord will recover their investment, over time, through the rental income they will receive from letting the property.

4.4.13 Homeswap and Homesteading have previously been piloted as methods to tackle empty properties and assist with the HMRI programme. Whilst the products were useful they proved to be difficult to sell and in the current housing market there are no proposals to use these forms of assistance during 2009/10

Business Renewal Loan

4.4.14 Equity based financial assistance up to the value of £30,000 to enable businesses involved in designated HMRI regeneration schemes to undertake shop fitting and internal improvement works. As with the Equity Renewal Loan mentioned in 4.3 above there may be occasions when it will be necessary to increase the loan beyond the limit of £30,000 to ensure the completion of renovation works to a satisfactory standard

4.4.15 It is proposed to amend the policy to allow the Director of Regeneration delegation to increase the loan up to £40,000 in cases of unforeseen works.

4.5 OTHER ASSISTANCE

4.5.1 In response to a concern about rising personal debt a Service Level Agreement has been negotiated with Wirral Citizens Advice Bureau to provide access to debt and housing advice to residents, accredited landlords and agents living or operating in HMRI areas. Cases referred under this agreement receive attention within a target of 2 weeks of the referral being made. Similar provisions have been made by Wirral's Pathfinder partners. This assistance will be incorporated in the revised policy.

4.6 GENERAL

4.6.1 Environmental Responsibility

In light of the urgency of the climate change agenda it is proposed that the revised policy be reviewed over the next 12 months to ensure that it remains up to date on these issues.

4.6.2 Assistance to Private Sector Landlords

Subject to the results of the Wirral Private Sector House Condition Survey 2008 it is intended to review the assistance available to private sector landlords. Any proposed new assistance will form part of a wider strategy to improve conditions in this particular sector and be subject to the approval of Members at the next policy review.

4.6.3 Monitoring Customer Satisfaction

It is proposed to introduce comprehensive customer satisfaction monitoring for all assistance provided in the revised policy. This will be phased in during 2009/10.

4.6.4 Preferred Builders Protocol

On the 16th October 2008, Cabinet agreed to adopt a Preferred Builders Protocol, restricting the approval of Home Repair Assistance and Equity Renewal loan assistance applications to home owners who employ only builders registered with the Wirral Traders Scheme. Within the protocol it was proposed that the Council's Home Improvement Team provide a high level of site visits, supervision and customer liaison. Since this was agreed, advice from the Council's Insurers suggests that this process should be limited to a high level of site visits and customer liaison to ensure the satisfactory completion of work. Any detailed supervision should be undertaken by either the client or their agent, in line with 7.2 in the Private Sector Housing and Regeneration assistance Policy.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The funding of the revised policy will be from HMRI and Housing Capital Programme resources for 2009/10.

5.2 The Council is currently seeking to further support the revised policy through external partner agencies. At this stage there are no guarantees that additional funding will be secured.

6.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Existing staffing arrangements will deliver the assistance policy.

7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The revised policy recognises that there will be a proportion of vulnerable owners whom, for whatever reason, will not have sufficient resources to maintain their homes. In addition in relation to clearance action some owners and residents might be unable to fund a move to an alternative property. The revised policy makes provision for such owners and residents, should they approach the Council for assistance.

7.2 Service delivery of the revised policy will be monitored in relation to equality and diversity

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The revised policy takes into account community safety implications, particularly in relation to renovation assistance.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The revised policy will include measures to both support the improvement of the existing housing stock where this is deemed to be sustainable and assist with the strategic clearance of obsolete housing stock and the provision of new, energy efficient houses for the future. The policy includes measures to reduce environmental impact and will be reviewed during 2009/10 with the aim of improving environmental responsibility in light of the climate change agenda.

10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Private Sector Housing Renewal supports the Urban Regeneration Strategy outlined in the Unitary Development Plan and the Regional Spatial Strategy. In particular it helps to create and build sustainable communities through HMR, direct new housing into regeneration priority areas and assist the Council in sustaining its commitment to protecting the Green Belt

11.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The revised assistance policy targets the majority of its financial assistance towards low income households. Those applicants deemed to have the ability to afford improvements or relocation by other means will be sign-posted accordingly.

12.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The revised assistance policy will help those members of society least able to afford to undertake improvements or move to alternative accommodation. In addition, it will assist private landlords to improve housing conditions for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

13.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 This report affects all wards.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Cabinet Report 16th October 2008 – Adoption of a Preferred Builder Protocol in Connection with the Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy

14.2 Cabinet Report 15th January 2009 – Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy.

15.0 RECOMMENDATION

15.1 That Members agree the revised Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy as set out in this report and that this be implemented with immediate effect.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Alan Lipscombe who can be contacted on 691 8122

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

THE FUTURE OF TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN WIRRAL

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:-

- a) provide Members with an overview of the current issues and recent opportunities which have arisen in relation to the further development of tenant and resident involvement in Wirral.
- b) provide the outcomes of a recent review of the current arrangements between Wirral Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (WFTRA), Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) and the Council arising from a wider community consultation exercise on future tenant and resident involvement in Wirral.
- c) seek Members' endorsement of the proposal received by Voluntary Community Action Wirral (VCAW) for community engagement and consultation with tenants and residents.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 WFTRA was formed in May 2000, its role being to act as an umbrella organisation for tenant and residents groups in Wirral; providing a collective voice and a mechanism for feeding back issues raised by Council tenants groups.
- 2.2 Following the housing Stock Transfer in 2005 to Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) Wirral Council and WPH entered into a three way agreement with WFTRA to support them with funding primarily from WPH and the Council for their previous role and function of an umbrella group for tenant and resident groups to continue.

3.0 NATIONAL POLICY

- 3.1 In terms of Central Government policy, there has been a significant change over recent years in what has traditionally been called 'tenant participation' but is now increasingly referred to as 'resident' or 'customer' engagement and involvement.
- 3.2 The government, through the Audit Commission and the recently established Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Tenant Services Authority (TSA), places effective community engagement and involvement at the heart of its work to develop sustainable communities where local people want to live and work.
- 3.3 In response to these structural and organisational changes there are increased requirements placed on social landlords (RSLs) to introduce a more flexible approach to community engagement, adjusting their methods to suit the needs and opportunities of local areas and people.

- 3.4 Whilst this approach, may include some of the traditional activities and structures of 'tenant participation', it obviously will have different aims and objectives. This new approach, whilst more inclusive and therefore should be better from a tenants and residents perspective, does not fit easily with the established model of tenant participation which is more structured, formal and less able to adapt to the variable or changing needs of individual communities.
- 3.5 RSL's, to meet the changing agenda, are increasingly aligning their resident and customer involvement policies with those of customer care and equality and diversity, to ensure this more flexible and fully inclusive approach to community engagement is achieved.
- 3.6 The HCA is clear in its policy 'People first; Delivering change through involvement', that it expects RSL's to embrace this new emerging model of involvement as an integral part of their business process with involvement directed towards achieving positive outcomes for residents, communities and RSL's. In particular, the HCA has developed 10 basic building blocks as a baseline for involvement which it expects RSL's to engage with, which are:
- Ensuring people have equal opportunities to take part in involvement and take active steps to engage with under-represented and vulnerable groups;
 - RSL's should develop a profile of residents in their homes and make positive effort to develop 'market intelligence' on their needs and aspirations;
 - RSL's should provide accessible information and feedback and take an open approach to providing information that is requested. This should include feedback on performance, comparison with peers and action taken to improve; feedback on how involvement has brought about change and feedback on complaints, lessons learnt and changes made;
 - Developing a range of methods of involvement, with active residents and / or communities, that allow people to be involved on their terms;
 - Negotiate with residents and / or communities, the terms of reference for involvement activities;
 - Enabling involvement by providing properly resourced capacity building and training for residents, staff and where appropriate, communities;
 - Developing with residents and / or communities, ways to negotiate service targets, influence corporate decision making and hold the RSL to account;
 - Developing and sustaining mechanisms, with residents and / or communities, which enable influence over investment in and the design of affordable homes, and where relevant, wider neighbourhood priorities;
 - Considering with residents and / or communities the value for money of involvement activities, including the added value that involvement creates;
 - Developing with residents and / or communities appropriate neighbourhood level targets and scrutiny where they want this and it is relevant.
- 3.7 In the light of the changing national policy it is important that the Council in its role as the Strategic Housing authority in Wirral supports the RSL's in meeting their objectives in terms of resident engagement and involvement and also has a comprehensive engagement strategy with the private sector residents groups in Wirral.
- 3.8 In the light of these developments and the consequent need to respond to the Government's new policy framework for resident engagement Wirral Council agreed with WPH as the major social landlord in the Borough to carry out a review of existing tenant and resident involvement to ascertain whether in the changed national policy context the current arrangements remain fit for purpose.

4.0 REVIEW OF EXISTING TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN WIRRAL

4.1 During 2008 the Council, WPH and WFTRA agreed to commission an independent specialist consultant (PS Consultants) to review existing tenant and resident involvement arrangements for Wirral, the agreement for partnership working between all partners and the options for future community engagement. The results of this review were presented to representatives of wider tenants and residents groups at an event held on 13th November 2008 to seek views about how both WPH and the Council can best work with tenants and residents in the future.

4.2 The event was well attended by 62 resident representatives, attending on behalf of a range of groups including a significant number of private tenant and resident groups.

4.3 Following on from the event in November 2008 a postal survey was conducted with a wide range of community groups and representatives, the majority of which had originally been invited to the consultation event. The postal survey endorsed a number of key themes raised at the event and sought to explore these further.

4.4 In summary, the following key findings have been identified from the consultation processes undertaken.

- There are a growing number of healthy and active local tenants and residents groups working independently of the WFTRA in their local areas on a range of community based activities.
- Only a few of WFTRA's member organisations across the borough are actively participating in the Federation at the present time.
- Following stock transfer, the current structure / operation of WFTRA does not work sufficiently effectively as its original structure and constitution was established to work with a Council housing service and Council housing tenants, which have since become part of a stock transfer organisation. Changes over recent years in national policy regarding community engagement and involvement now requires a more fully inclusive, flexible approach to be developed.
- The consultation event and postal survey carried out demonstrates that there is support by the wider Wirral community, which includes both WFTRA members, general community groups and "lone voices", for some form of alternative mechanism to support tenants, residents and community groups / representatives on Wirral.
- Membership of any new mechanism should include a wider range of people / organisations such as community associations and local general interest community groups etc.
- To ensure that any new mechanism is continually refreshed and able to move forward to address new challenges as they arise, there is clear support for the idea that it is managed in such a way that allows the Chair Person and Executive Officers if appropriate, to hold their position for a maximum of 2 years.
- Feedback regarding future funding of an alternative mechanism to support tenants, residents and community groups / representatives on the Wirral, suggests there should be a combination of funding options including Wirral Council, WPH and other local social housing landlords as well as membership fees from member groups.
- Any future involvement mechanism should be supported by a partnership which would include Wirral Council, WPH and other local social housing landlords.

5.0 A PROPOSAL FROM THE VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY ACTION WIRRAL (VCAW)

- 5.1 Prompted by the findings of the review the VCAW lead officer for Housing, Regeneration and Homelessness has recently written to both the Director of Regeneration and Chair of the Strategic Housing and Liveability Partnership (SHLP) outlining the role that VCAW currently has in relation to community engagement.
- 5.2 VCAW is keen to ensure in line with the national policy context that appropriate representation at the SHLP is structured and inclusive for all communities in Wirral, to enable both the SHLP and VCAW to engage effectively through one specific route on related issues which affect local communities.
- 5.3 Key to this is VCAW and its continuing role in providing a mechanism for local community representatives to have a clear structure for having their voice heard on key strategic issues which affect their local neighbourhoods.
- 5.4 VCAW has requested the commitment of both the Director of Regeneration and the Chair of the SHLP and an agreement on a way forward to take on board the opportunity which now presents itself through the embedding of the representative roles for the engagement of local residents.
- 5.5 Clearly this request is timely with current need to formally review the existing community representation on the SHLP, respond to the views expressed as part of the community consultation and the need to look at new opportunities to develop and enhance tenant and resident involvement across the Borough in response to national policy.
- 5.6 Members will also be aware that the Budget Resolution for 2009/10 approved by Council called for a review of the Council's community engagement function and this work which is being led by the Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services is also influenced by the same factors which have prompted the current review of resident engagement and involvement.

6.0 VIEWS OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

- 6.1 Wirral Council both supports and works in partnership with VCAW of which WFTRA is a member. VCAW is the Council's preferred partner for local infrastructure and is the mechanism through which the public bodies should engage with its third sector partners in Wirral.
- 6.2 There are a number of advantages to VCAW being both the main route for the Council to use for community engagement and in aligning social tenants and residents groups with wider community groups in Wirral. These include:
- VCAW can offer access to a number of members including the WFTRA, who are representative of wider communities;
 - Access to a single body (which can represent both social and private residents and tenants groups) with which to engage on key strategic objectives, policy development and service reviews which will assist Wirral as a strategic enabling authority in its responsibilities around community engagement;
 - VCAW has an extensive membership and can act as a co-ordination point with which the Council and its officers can communicate and receive a cohesive response from local voluntary, community and faith sectors;
 - Reduction of community fatigue which can be associated with continuous and un-coordinated consultation and engagement methods;

- A further mechanism with which local voluntary, community and faith sectors can use to ensure local issues affecting them and their communities are heard and well represented;
- A channel to coordinate key strategic issues and messages which are facing its members;
- Ability to communicate key regeneration and policy matters via the VCAW newsletter;
- Access to appropriate representatives to inform and participate in key regeneration activities and working groups such as the SHLP.

6.3 The SHLP has in recent meetings agreed to support RSL's in developing their approach to tenants / community engagement in accordance with HCA and TSA requirements. As such RSL's have been keen to ensure they work closely together to ensure that collectively they secure the most appropriate and easily accessible way of addressing this. Whilst it is not intended that VCAW will detract from RSLs having their own organisation engagement and consultation structures, it is a key objective that the RSL's will work constructively with VCAW (and the groups its represents which include WFTRA), to promote their own tenant groups.

6.4 The SHLP currently has 3 places designated for community representation, to ensure the wider community has the opportunity to participate in the strategic planning of housing and related services and to participate in the planning and monitoring of the partnership extended responsibilities including Housing Market Renewal. As the SHLP plays an active role in influencing the delivery of services to address housing priorities of the Borough across all tenures, community representatives are actively recruited from the existing VCAW structures.

6.5 Clearly the opportunity presented by VCAW through its all inclusive and well established structure is key to supporting both the Council, SHLP and local RSL's to ensure current government vision and policies are taken forward to develop a new approach to community engagement and involvement in Wirral.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Wirral Council has agreed to provide £103,000 financial support for VCAW for 2009/10.

7.2 The Council currently contributes up to £16, 096 per annum towards the support of the WFTRA. If the proposal recommended in this report is agreed by Members then this sum would no longer be required to support the WTFRA because the VCAW would take on the role of resident and tenant engagement.

7.3 The proposal from VCAW which is set out in this report does not identify any requirement for funding at this time.

7.4 However, Members will recall that in the Council Budget Resolution for 2009/10 there was a requirement for a report on the way that the Council undertakes its community engagement function. This report is currently being prepared by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services and it may be that as part of the Council's future Community Engagement Strategy funding is needed to support VCAW in relation to its work with tenants and residents groups. It is therefore proposed to reserve the current Regeneration Department budget until the outcome of the work on the Community Engagement Strategy is known.

8.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Ensuring that Wirral Council has one central conduit for consulting and engaging with local communities and stakeholders via VCAW, of which WFTRA is a member of, will enable officers and RSLs to more effectively engage tenants and residents when developing new strategies, policies and initiatives.

9.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLCAITIONS

9.1 Supporting VCAW as Wirral's preferred partner and single body with which to engage, tenants and residents will ensure that all communities will have equal access to making their views known on the Strategic Housing issues affecting their communities.

10.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

101 Supporting VCAW will ensure that a wide range of tenants and residents in communities across the borough have the opportunity to engage with and ensure their views and concerns are raised and addressed appropriately relating to anti-social behaviour and improving their local areas.

11.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

11.1 More inclusive community engagement will ensure that community's views are more representative when taking forward Local Agenda 21 objectives

12.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None arising from this report.

13.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None arising from this report.

14.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Supporting VCAW as Wirral's preferred partner and single body with which to engage tenants and residents on key strategic objectives, policy development and service reviews will assist the Council in ensuring that it promotes social inclusion.

15.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

15.1 This report affects all wards within Wirral.

16.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 Cabinet – 3rd August 2005.

16.2 'People first – Delivering change through involvement'
www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/conwebdoc.11159

17.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1 That Cabinet:-

in the light of changing Central Government policy and the recent borough wide consultation on the future of tenant and resident involvement in Wirral, approve the

opportunity presented by VCAW, (of which WFTRA is a member), to be the partner through whom the Council in its role as Strategic Housing Authority engages with tenants and residents in Wirral.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Sue Hooper who can be contacted on 691 8245

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