



# Council

Town Hall  
Wallasey  
24 October 2008

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council to be held at **6.15 pm on Monday, 3 November 2008** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey, to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects : -

**Contact Officer:** Andrea Grant  
**Tel:** 0151 691 8559  
**e-mail:** [andreagrants@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:andreagrants@wirral.gov.uk)  
**Website:** <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

---

## AGENDA

### 1. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To receive the Mayor's announcements and any apologies for absence.

### 2. IAN FRASER VC

The Council is requested to mark the recent death of Lt Commander Ian Edward Fraser VC, DSC, RD and Bar, JP, RNR (Rtd).

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Council are invited to consider whether they have a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

### 4. PETITIONS

To receive petitions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 21.

## **5. MINUTES**

To receive as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 14 July and 20 October 2008.

## **6. PROCEEDINGS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

To receive the proceedings, resolutions, recommendations and reports of the Cabinet and committees, meeting on the dates indicated below, subject to any amendments approved by the Council.

Cabinet	9 and 23 July, 4 and 25 September, 16 October
Audit and Risk Management Committee	30 September
Employment and Appointments Committee	18 July, 24 September
Licensing Act 2003 Committee	29 September
Licensing, Health & Safety and General Purposes Committee	15 September
Pensions Committee	29 September
Planning Committee	15 and 31 July, 21 August, 18 September, 9 October
Standards Committee	30 September
Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee	16 September, 28 October
Community and Customer Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6 and 30 October
Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	3 September, 27 October
Culture, Tourism and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee	25 September
Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	24 September, 28 October
Finance and Best Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee	22 September, 28 October
Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8 and 25 September
Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 September
Social Care, Health and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 September, 2 October
Streetscene and Transport Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8 September, 28 October

## **7. QUESTIONS**

To deal with questions from councillors and from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Order 11.

## **8. MATTERS REFERRED FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

To consider and determine any references from overview and scrutiny committees. The Council's attention is drawn to the minutes from the following meetings that respond to Cabinet minute 219 (16 October):

Children's Services and Lifelong Learning – 28 October  
Community and Customer Engagement – 30 October  
Corporate Services – 27 October  
Environment – 28 October  
Finance and Best Value – 28 October  
Streetscene and Transport Services – 28 October

## **8.1 ANNUAL REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

### **9. NOTICES OF MOTION**

To consider the following motions, submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 8(1) and listed in accordance with Standing Order 8(2).

#### **9.1 BICYCLE RECYCLING SCHEME**

**Proposed** by Councillor Jean Quinn

**Seconded** by Councillor Gilchrist

(1) This Council notes:

(i) the urgent need to step up our efforts to combat climate change through increased recycling and reduction in car use;

(ii) the need to address the serious socio-economic and health inequalities in Wirral;

(iii) the need to provide activities and employment and training opportunities for disaffected young people; those not engaged in education, employment or training (NEETS), and those involved with anti-social behaviour.

(2) This Council believes that cycling can provide a means of cheap and sustainable travel and improve health and well-being, and has the potential to provide disaffected young people with rewarding and enjoyable activities, as well as skills and training.

(3) This Council also believes that access to cheap bicycles is essential if those who can most benefit from cycling are to be encouraged to become involved.

(4) This Council notes the growing number of bicycle recycling schemes throughout the country providing access both to affordable bikes and employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged people.

(5) This Council therefore requests officers to investigate bicycle recycling schemes elsewhere, together with sources of funding, with a view to establishing a Wirral Bicycle Recycling Scheme.

## 9.2 MERSEYSIDE POLICE AUTHORITY ESTATES STRATEGY

**Proposed** by Councillor Holbrook

**Seconded** by Councillor Harney

(1) This Council notes the Merseyside Police Authority Estate Strategy proposals for the modernisation of its estate in Wirral.

(2) This Council notes in particular that:

- the modernisation is intended to provide buildings that are fit for purpose to deliver policing in the 21st century for the benefit of the people of Wirral;
- the proposals include investment in a new Area Command Centre in Birkenhead, replacing Mortimer Street and Laird Street Police Stations;
- the network of neighbourhood stations will be maintained;
- there is a commitment to maintaining current response times.

(3) This Council also notes that its own Strategic Asset Review is under way.

(4) This Council therefore welcomes the Merseyside Police Authority's commitment to the modernisation of its estate and the considerable investment in Wirral, and looks forward to working with the Merseyside Police Authority to determine the most mutually beneficial use of the assets of both authorities in the Borough including the use of community rooms in Police Authority or Council buildings.

## 9.3 ADULT SOCIAL CARE - PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Proposed by Councillor Mountney  
Seconded by Councillor Watt

(1) This Council recognises that a number of concerns were raised by a Council 'whistleblower' in October 2007 under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which in turn has resulted in the Audit Commission issuing Wirral Council with a Public Information Disclosure report.

(2) Council notes the findings of the report:

- Although 30 accredited providers are used by the Council only 12 contracts have been signed and returned by providers.
- No formal arrangements have been established for the contract monitoring of supported living providers.
- There are no arrangements at present for feedback from service users where there is dissatisfaction with services or where quality standards have not been met.
- There remains a substantial risk that users receiving services from one of the Council's service providers are being charged unfairly.
- The Council does not always know the actual contributions that the provider requires service users to contribute for services they provide. Consequently the Council is not in a position to know whether the aggregate of charges levied on service users by the Council and contributions required by the provider are in compliance with the guidance of fairer charging. It is not clear who is currently ensuring that these service users are receiving adequate protection for the risk of financial abuse.

(3) Council notes the fact that these findings had previously been raised with officers of the Council by the whistleblower and, whilst thanking the Audit Commission for the production of this report and bringing the matter out into the open, condemns the fact that the Council's own procedures are so defective as to have needed the Audit Commission's intervention to bring them to the notice of the Council and the public.

(4) Council believes that this PIDA report and the Department's unwillingness to bring to the Council's attention the whistleblower's concerns regarding the treatment of those in our care demonstrates a lack of effective governance, management and leadership within the Department.

(5) Therefore this Council instructs the Chief Executive to appoint an independent person of sufficient standing and experience to investigate these matters fully, speedily and rigorously and to bring their findings to the Council's attention, including any disciplinary action, if required, at the earliest possible occasion.

## 9.4 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007

Proposed by Councillor Green  
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Rennie

(1) This Council welcomes the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, giving central government a duty to assist local authorities with new powers and opportunities to promote sustainable and successful local communities and neighbourhoods.

(2) Furthermore, Council welcomes the cross-party support for the Act in the House of Commons and supports Nick Hurd MP in his concerns that “the decline and loss of local services is having a clear and serious impact on the prosperity of local communities”. Locally, in Wirral, this can be seen over many years, under all Governments, in the decisions by a variety of agencies, quangos, public sector organisations and Government departments to reduce or remove local services such as:

- Over half of Wirral post offices closed
- Wards 6 & 7 at Victoria Central Hospital closed
- Remploy’s CCU closed
- Closure of Withens Lane College

(3) This Council recognises the duty for Government to produce a local spending plan that details the overall spending of taxes in an area and welcomes the ‘local policy proposal’ of the Act giving local communities the opportunity, through their council, to put forward ambitious local policy proposals within the overall spending limits.

(4) This Council therefore requests that Cabinet ‘opts in’ to the Sustainable Communities Act and requests from the Community and Customer Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee a detailed plan and recommendation for Cabinet on how Wirral will move forward to determine the nature and level of assistance from Central Government.

## 9.5 NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

**Proposed** by Councillor Stapleton  
**Seconded** by Councillor McLachlan

- (1) This Council notes that:
- 2008 marks the tenth anniversary of this Labour Government's passing of the National Minimum Wage Act;
  - around one million workers across the UK have benefited thanks to a raise in the National Minimum Wage. Workers aged 22 and over will now be paid a minimum of £5.73 an hour; those aged 18-21 will be paid a minimum of £4.77 an hour and those aged 16 and 17 will be paid a minimum of £3.53 an hour;
  - the Government is also proposing a further clampdown on bosses who fail to pay the minimum wage, with tough new penalties set to come into force next April;
  - when David Cameron campaigned against the National Minimum Wage, wages of as little as £1.20 an hour were common and legal. He said that the minimum wage "would send unemployment straight back up". Contrary to his prediction, this Labour Government has delivered a rising minimum wage and more people in work than ever before.
- (2) This Council therefore wishes to recognise and celebrate 10 years of the National Minimum Wage as landmark legislation which has helped thousands of Wirral residents and millions of British citizens to maintain a decent standard of living.

## 9.6 GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

**Proposed** by Councillor PL Davies

**Seconded** by Councillor Kenny

(1) This Council congratulates Gordon Brown on the decisive action he has taken in the current financial crisis and his role in bringing governments together in Europe, and America, to set up the appropriate government intervention and recapitalisation of banks needed to stabilise markets and prevent a financial meltdown that would have devastated the lives of everyone.

(2) Council notes that the EU Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, recognised his contribution when he said “I want to pay a very sincere tribute to the role that Prime Minister Brown has played and is playing in these matters. He has acted as an impetus to the action that we have been taking collectively. He has been very clear from the beginning that he was developing a British response, but also seeking to contribute to a Europe-wide solution and also to a global solution.”

(3) Council further endorses his actions in seeking a new, global regulatory and warning system that will prevent any such financial collapse again in the future.

(4) Council notes that the Conservative Party Leader, David Cameron, has been conspicuous by his silence and refusal to condemn the irresponsible actions of bankers and hedge fund managers.

(5) Council also notes that a number of key donors to Tory Funds, as outlined in Channel 4's Dispatches programme “Cameron's money men” are hedge fund managers or bankers, including Lord Ashcroft, and that some donors to Tory funds were linked to the short-selling of Bradford and Bingley shares before the practice was banned.

(6) Council condemns the Conservative policy over the past decades, both here in Britain and through the Republican party in the States, which has seen an almost fundamentalist crusade for total de-regulation, followed by irresponsible short-term ‘get rich quick’ behaviour by the banks and money men, followed by a collapse in the system requiring taxpayers money as a bail out.

(7) Council further condemns the Conservatives for their outrageous behaviour in attempting to blame Labour while refusing to condemn those closer to home who are really to blame.

## 9.7 **CAMPAIGN FOR GURKHA RIGHTS**

**Proposed** by Councillor Harry Smith  
**Seconded** by Councillor Walter Smith

(1) This Council notes that Gurkhas have played an active front line part in the British Army's activities in times of war and peace for nearly 200 years. In this period approximately 300,000 have fought alongside United Kingdom soldiers, with 45,000 of them being either killed or wounded.

(2) Council notes that the Government announced in September 2004 a change in immigration rules that allowed Gurkhas who had served in the British Army to settle in the United Kingdom with their families.

(3) Council notes with concern, however, that this offer has only been extended to cover those Gurkhas who had served at least four years and who had been discharged after 1 July 1997.

(4) Council believes that, given the exceptional service that they have given to the United Kingdom, Gurkhas and their families should be given fast track eligibility for either the right to remain or citizenship.

(5) Council agrees to send this motion to Wirral's MPs to ask for their support and instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Local Government Association asking them to lobby the Government on this matter.

#### **10. MATTERS FOR DEBATE (Pages 19 - 28)**

In accordance with Standing Order 5(3), to consider written comments, objections or amendments to minutes submitted under Standing Order 7(2), together with those motions, submitted under item 8 above, that the Council agrees to debate at this meeting and any minority reports submitted in accordance with Standing Order 35(4).

#### **11. CONSTITUTION - AMENDMENTS**

Further to the review of the Constitution, the results of which were reported to the meeting in July, the Cabinet has proposed some more amendments, which require approval by the Council.

#### **12. VACANCIES**

To receive nominations, in accordance with Standing Order 25(5), in respect of changes (if any) in the membership of the Cabinet and committees, and to approve nominations for appointments to outside organisations.

A list of any necessary changes will be circulated before the meeting.

#### **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

To consider any other items of business that the Mayor accepts as being urgent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized first letter followed by several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

### **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

A major 'in-depth' review of "The Outcomes for Children in Foster Care" was completed by a small panel of members. Evidence was gathered from a wide number of sources including interviews with young people, foster carers plus social care and education professionals, in addition to written evidence. The final report, which was widely welcomed, has led to many of the recommendations being supported by the Cabinet.

A second 'in-depth' panel review has been commenced by the Committee. This review, into "the Youth Outreach Service", is due to report during the summer of 2008. Again, evidence has been gathered through interviews with key officers as well as several visits onto the streets with the outreach workers. In addition, visits have been made to youth clubs and a voluntary organisation which offers outreach work to young people.

Committee has received reports including the following:

- The admissions process for primary and secondary schools
- Progress on the Children's and Young Peoples Plan 2006-8
- An evaluation of the Annual Performance Assessment
- An evaluation of the standards and achievements in Wirral schools
- A review of the Complaints procedure operated by the Children's and Young Peoples department
- An update on the School Improvement Strategy

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

### **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- The Fostering Service of the Council has, hopefully, been improved through many recommendations from the Fostering Review being implemented.
- Many service users (including foster carers, young people in care and professional staff) have been engaged during the Fostering Scrutiny Review.
- Members of the Older Peoples Parliament were included as part of the Youth Outreach review panel. This was done to give a non-council perspective to the review.
- Young people as well as staff have been engaged during the Youth Outreach review.
- Contribution to the scrutiny process has been widened by the Committee including two diocese representatives and two parent governor representatives.
- The 'in-depth' panel reviews have been carried out in a non-party consensual environment.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

The Youth Outreach review will be concluded.

In addition, a work programme for the new municipal year has been agreed and includes:

- Committee organisation and governance arrangements within Children's Services
- Literacy levels in schools at the end of Key Stage 2
- Transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Services
- NEETS (Not in Employment, Education or Training)
- Update on Special Schools
- Behavioural Issues and Exclusions

An 'in-depth' panel review will be undertaken into Literacy levels in primary schools at the end of Key Stage 2.

Regular reports regarding both Performance and Financial Monitoring will be reviewed.

**Councillor Frank Doyle**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8**

**Councillor Sheila Clarke**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2008-9**

# **COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Community and Customer Engagement.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

A review of the operation of the Customer Call Centre was commenced by the Committee. The review included visits by members to two other Call Centres; one operated by another local authority and a second in the private sector.

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Customer Services Annual Report for 2007
- Revised Customer Access Strategy
- A review of the operation of Bebington One Stop Shop and Pennant House
- Annual Report of the Citizens Panel
- Progress of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Service
- Monitoring of the proposed roll-out of Local Housing Allowance
- Scrutiny of the proposed Customer Care Guidelines

The Committee reviewed and commented upon the proposed changes to the Post Office Network during the review of the post office service in Wirral.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- By meeting with representatives of the Post Office, the Committee has engaged with an important partner organisation. This resulted in a meeting that enabled possible future mutually beneficial developments to be discussed.
- The visits to other call centres enabled the Committee to establish some valuable benchmarking criteria and learn from the experiences of other organisations.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year has been agreed. This includes:

- Equality and Diversity
- Comprehensive Engagement Strategy
- Customer Care Standards
- Area Forums

**Councillor Jean Stapleton**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8**

**Councillor Chris Meaden**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2008-9**

# **CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

Committee has received reports including the following:

- A report on the progress made in implementing the Investment in Energy Efficiency Programme
- A review, including the financial consequences, of the Coroner's Service in Wirral
- A presentation on Communications. This resulted in further work being done, which led to the formation of a centralised marketing team
- A presentation on Accommodation Strategy and Asset Management
- Presentations on matters relating to staff retention
- A report on initial information regarding the introduction of the Government's Carbon Reduction Commitment in 2010

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee. This work included the scrutiny of proposed budget savings.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- An invitation to the Coroner to attend a Committee meeting led to a better understanding of issues regarding the Coroners service

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year has been devised. It will include:

- Human Resources
- Asset Management
- Planned Maintenance
- Emergency Planning and Resilience
- Performance and Financial Monitoring

**Councillor Chris Meaden**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8**

**Councillor Leah Fraser**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2008-9**

# **CULTURE, TOURISM AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Leisure.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Regular reviews of the Implementation Plan for the Wirral Tourism Strategy
- A review of Park Management Plans
- Producing a response to submissions arising from the Youth Parliament regarding Cultural Services facilities
- Respondes to a number of petitions on matters relating to the remit of the Committee. These included: Vehicular access to Leasowe Common, Landican Cemetary, Allotment provision and the Children's Play Area in Lime Kiln Lane, Seacombe.
- A review of the "Get Into Reading" project
- An evaluation of the Allotment Strategy 2007-12

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- The Committee holds its meetings in a variety of locations in order to improve accessibility to the public.
- Public consultation was carried out on those issues which have been raised by members of the public through the production of petitions on issues within the remit of the Committee.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year will be devised. This is likely to concentrate on the Strategic Forward Plan for Cultural Services

Regular reports regarding both Performance and Financial Monitoring will be reviewed.

**Councillor Sue Brown**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8**

**Councillor John Hale**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2008-9**

# **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Environment.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Reports on the ongoing work being undertaken by the Council in response to the Nottingham Declaration and the threat of climate change
- A report on the impact of variable rainfall in Wirral
- An evaluation of the impact of Smokefree Wirral
- A presentation on the Waste Strategy by the Director of Waste Disposal at MWDA (Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority)
- Endorsement of the Trading Standards Service Delivery Plan
- Response to the petition regarding the request to return to weekly residual waste collections. The petition was organised by the Wirral Globe newspaper.
- An evaluation of the implementation of a previous policy (“Don’t give a dog a bad name”) in an attempt to tackle the nuisance of dog fouling
- Review of the proposed “Household Waste Collection and Enforcement Policy”
- A report on initial information regarding the introduction of the Government’s Carbon Reduction Commitment in 2010
- Progress report on Fly Tipping
- A report on the actions being taken by the Council regarding the Sale of alcohol and tobacco to under 18’s
- Healthy Eating campaigns and Takeaways
- A report on Cockling on the River Dee
- A report on the introduction of the Animal Welfare Act which came into force on 1st April 2007

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee. This work included the scrutiny of proposed budget savings.

The Committee again reviewed the proposed “Household Waste Collection and Enforcement Policy” following the Call-In of the Cabinet decision.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

The proposed Recycling Enforcement Policy was debated prior to a Cabinet decision. This was a good example of pre-determination scrutiny.

The Committee reacted to public concern by responding to the petition regarding the return to weekly residual waste collections.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year is being produced. Topics are likely to include:

- Carbon Footprint Reduction
- Recycling and waste reduction
- Trading standards in relation to off-licences and under-age sale of alcohol
- Inspection of food premises
- Dog fouling
- Performance and Financial Monitoring reports

**Councillor Denise Roberts**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8 and 2008-9**

# **FINANCE AND BEST VALUE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Best Value.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

A special Finance Scrutiny meeting was held at which Chief Officers explained the position regarding the production of a balanced budget for year-end and in achieving the service re-engineering savings for their department.

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Projected Budget 2008-11, including the budget for 2008-9
- Updates on progress on the Use of Resources Action Plan
- Monitoring of progress with meeting service re-engineering targets
- Update on the Medium-term Financial Strategy 2007-10
- Review of the draft Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Strategy
- Housing and Council Tax Benefits - Annual Report
- Monitoring of the proposed roll-out of Local Housing Allowance
- Report on the Audit Commission 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment Use of Resources judgement for Wirral.

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- The Committee has tried to review budget savings and service re-engineering savings on an impartial all-party basis. This demonstrates a good degree of independence and is exemplified by the Committee requesting service directors to attend special meetings to discuss specific budgetary issues.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

The work programme for the new municipal year will include:

- Monitoring the current position of the Authority revenue accounts and General Fund balances
- Review action plans to improve the Authority's CPA score and Use of Resources Assessment
- Review areas of the budget that are causing concern
- Achievement of savings targets
- Performance and Financial Monitoring reports

**Councillor Chris Teggin**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8**

**Councillor Phil Gilchrist**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2008-9**

# **HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Review of the Audit Commission Inspection (2007) of Wirral's Strategic Approach to Housing
- Monitoring of the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) in Wirral
- Review of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and its impact upon some processes within Wirral Council.
- Review of the use of Dispersal Orders as applied from Section 30 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Review of Stock Transfer Monitoring reports
- Scrutiny of proposed budget savings
- Review of the Empty Property Strategy in Wirral
- Consideration of the draft Homelessness Strategy for Wirral
- Review of the Strategic Market Housing Assessment for Wirral

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

The Committee reviewed the proposed "Newheartlands HMRI Business Plan 2008-2011" following the Call-In of the Cabinet decision. The original Cabinet decision was supported.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- "A community voice" is heard by ensuring that two representatives of Wirral Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations are members of this Scrutiny Committee.
- The review of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act resulted in changes to training of new staff and the consideration of crime and disorder matters within the Planning (Development Control) process.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year has been agreed and will include:

- Housing Market Renewal Initiative
- CCTV Control Room

- Monitor the impact of the previous review of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- Empty Property Strategy
- Discussion with the Area Commander of Merseyside Police regarding policing and community safety issues
- Review of the Family Intervention Project
- Discussion with officers of Wirral Partnership Homes
- Homelessness, with specific reference to rough sleepers and street drinkers
- Housing Restraint policy, Section 106 policy and the provision of affordable housing

Regular reports regarding both Performance and Financial Monitoring will be reviewed.

A joint meeting comprising Housing & Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee plus Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take place to initiate a review of the interaction of planning and housing policies in the borough. Among the issues to be covered will be the Housing Restraint policy, Section 106 policy and the provision of affordable housing.

**Councillor Alan Taylor**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8 and 2008-9**

# **REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning Strategy.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Scrutinized proposed budget savings
- Retained an overview of current Regeneration issues over the year in the borough
- Responded to a petition on the Telecommunications mast in Moreton
- Commenced the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Wirral
- Considered Conservation Area appraisals

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

The Committee reviewed the report into the “T-Mobile Telecomms Masts” following the Call-In of the Cabinet decision.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- The Committee provides a “sounding board” for major proposed developments within the Regeneration portfolio.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year has been agreed and will include:

- Working Neighbourhoods Fund
- ‘Aftercare’ for companies setting up new businesses in Wirral
- Consideration of the most appropriate location for Development Control within the Council’s management structure
- Regular reports regarding both Performance and Financial Monitoring will be reviewed.

**Councillor Alan Jennings**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8**

**Councillor Simon Mountney**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2008-9**

# **SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Social Care Health and Inclusion. The local health services and the NHS are also scrutinised by this committee.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

An in-depth panel review into the Hospital Discharge process has been initiated. A workshop was held on this issue and subsequently the scope for the review has been agreed. The review is being led by a panel of three members plus a representative of the Older Peoples Parliament. There will be a particular focus on “the patient’s experience”. Plans for the review are now in place and include interviews with key officers, the holding of Focus Groups with patients and carers who have recent experience of the discharge process, as well as visits to the Discharge Lounge at Arrowe Park hospital.

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Reports on the national GP survey “Your Doctor, Your Experience, Your Say”.
- North West Ambulance Service and the Wirral pilot
- Annual Health Check
- Presentation regarding the Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology NHS Foundation Trust
- Hospital Discharge process
- Transition from Children to Adult Social Services
- Audiology Services in Wirral
- Developing Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) in Wirral
- Transforming Equipment Services and “The Retail Model”
- Individual Budgets and Self Directed Care
- Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy
- Report on the “Valuing People Now” consultation process

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

The Committee reviewed the proposed “Meals on Wheels contract 2008-14” following the Call-In of the Cabinet decision.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- The Committee enabled the Wirral Patient and Public Involvement Forum to influence the provision of audiology services in Wirral. It is now recognised that the service is much improved comparative to 2006, when the issue was first raised with the Scrutiny Committee by representatives of the Forum.

- Scrutiny of partners has been embraced through the constructive work undertaken with Wirral PCT and Wirral University Hospital Trust.
- The contribution to the scrutiny process by the Committee has been widened by including a representative from the Older Peoples Parliament.
- The panel managing the review into the Hospital Discharge process includes a member of the Older Peoples Parliament.
- The Hospital Discharge review, due to take place during the second half of 2008, will encourage involvement of the public as the panel researches views of “the patient’s experience” of the service.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

The in-depth panel review into the Hospital Discharge process will be concluded.

A subsequent in-depth panel review is also likely to develop during the year from the remainder of the work programme.

The work programme for the new municipal year will also include:

- Regular updates on the Transforming Adult Social Care Agenda
- Regular updates on the Departmental Plan
- Support for Carers
- Progress reports on the creation of the LINKs (Local Involvement Networks) Forum
- Progress report on the Wirral Respond & Convey Pilot scheme (ambulance service)
- Occupational Therapy
- Reducing Alcohol Abuse
- Children’s Transition to Adult Social Services
- Feedback from the Older People’s Parliament survey of patient’s hospital stay / discharge experiences
- Review of Meals on wheels contract
- Health Inequalities across the borough
- Performance and Financial Monitoring reports

Once the Hospital Discharge Review has been concluded, it is planned for another topic to be chosen from the above work programme to form the subject of an ‘in-depth’ panel review.

**Councillor Ann Bridson**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8 and 2008-9**

# **STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee reviews the areas of responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Transport Services.

## **MAJOR ACTIONS DURING THE YEAR**

Committee has received reports including the following:

- Review of Merseyside Congestion Target Delivery Plan
- Review of Wirral Hospital's Travel Plan
- Public consultation on proposed gating orders in a variety of locations
- Consultation on several proposed traffic calming schemes and local safety schemes
- Review of Local Transport Capital Programme 2007-8
- Consider objections to proposed pedestrian crossings at two locations
- Sponsorship on the highway
- Review of a proposed Home Zone scheme (New Ferry)
- Review of the Highway Structural Maintenance programme 2007/8
- Scrutinized proposed budget savings
- Procedures for monitoring, regulating and co-ordinating the work of Utility companies in Wirral
- Consultation on proposed car park charges

Performance and Financial Monitoring has been undertaken into those areas within the remit of the Committee.

The committee reviewed the proposed "Community Road Safety Initiative" following the Call-In of the Cabinet decision. As a result, a further (seventh) pilot area was added to the trial.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPROVED SCRUTINY**

- Effective public consultation has been ensured regarding a number of specific local issues.
- The Committee responded to the "Community Road Safety Initiative" Call-In by altering the original Cabinet decision. (The amendment was subsequently agreed by Cabinet).

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

A work programme for the new municipal year has been agreed and will include:

- A review of road safety in the borough
- The approach to maximising benefits from new developments to maintain and improve the highway network, particularly via the section 106 process.

Regular reports regarding both Performance and Financial Monitoring will be reviewed.

**Councillor Harry Smith**  
**Committee Chair**  
**2007-8 and 2008-9**

This page is intentionally left blank

## COUNCIL – 3 November 2008

### MATTERS FOR DEBATE

The council is asked to consider the following motions, submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 8(1), and objections and amendments submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2). The order of business is as determined by the party groups in accordance with Standing Order 5(3) and the times for speeches by Standing Order 12(8) (all other speeches – 3 minutes).

#### **(1) MOTION: ADULT SOCIAL CARE – PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE**

**Proposed** by Councillor Mountney (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Watt (3 minutes)

(1) This Council recognises that a number of concerns were raised by a Council 'whistleblower' in October 2007 under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which in turn has resulted in the Audit Commission issuing Wirral Council with a Public Information Disclosure report.

(2) Council notes the findings of the report:

- Although 30 accredited providers are used by the Council only 12 contracts have been signed and returned by providers.
- No formal arrangements have been established for the contract monitoring of supported living providers.
- There are no arrangements at present for feedback from service users where there is dissatisfaction with services or where quality standards have not been met.
- There remains a substantial risk that users receiving services from one of the Councils service providers are being charged unfairly.
- The Council does not always know the actual contributions that the provider requires service users to contribute for services they provide. Consequently the Council is not in a position to know whether the aggregate of charges levied on service users by the Council and contributions required by the provider are in compliance with the guidance of fairer charging. It is not clear who is currently ensuring that these service users are receiving adequate protection for the risk of financial abuse.

(3) Council notes the fact that these findings had previously been raised with officers of the Council by the whistleblower and, whilst thanking the Audit Commission for the production of this report and bringing the matter out into the open, condemns the fact that the Council's own procedures are so defective as to have needed the Audit Commission's intervention to bring them to the notice of the Council and the public.

(4) Council believes that this PIDA report and the Department's unwillingness to bring to the Council's attention the whistleblower's concerns regarding the treatment of those in our care demonstrates a lack of effective governance, management and leadership within the Department.

(5) Therefore this Council instructs the Chief Executive to appoint an independent person of sufficient standing and experience to investigate these matters fully, speedily and rigorously and to bring their findings to the Council's attention, including any disciplinary action, if required, at the earliest possible occasion.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Mountney (7 minutes)

## **(2) MOTION: GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS**

**Proposed** by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Kenny (3 minutes)

(1) This Council congratulates Gordon Brown on the decisive action he has taken in the current financial crisis and his role in bringing governments together in Europe, and America, to set up the appropriate government intervention and recapitalisation of banks needed to stabilise markets and prevent a financial meltdown that would have devastated the lives of everyone.

(2) Council notes that the EU Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, recognised his contribution when he said "I want to pay a very sincere tribute to the role that Prime Minister Brown has played and is playing in these matters. He has acted as an impetus to the action that we have been taking collectively. He has been very clear from the beginning that he was developing a British response, but also seeking to contribute to a Europe-wide solution and also to a global solution."

(3) Council further endorses his actions in seeking a new, global regulatory and warning system that will prevent any such financial collapse again in the future.

(4) Council notes that the Conservative Party Leader, David Cameron, has been conspicuous by his silence and refusal to condemn the irresponsible actions of bankers and hedge fund managers.

(5) Council also notes that a number of key donors to Tory Funds, as outlined in Channel 4's Dispatches programme "Cameron's money men" are hedge fund managers or bankers, including Lord Ashcroft, and that some donors to Tory funds were linked to the short-selling of Bradford and Bingley shares before the practice was banned.

(6) Council condemns the Conservative policy over the past decades, both here in Britain and through the Republican party in the States, which has seen an almost fundamentalist crusade for total de-regulation, followed by irresponsible short-term 'get rich quick' behaviour by the banks and money men, followed by a collapse in the system requiring taxpayers money as a bail out.

(7) Council further condemns the Conservatives for their outrageous behaviour in attempting to blame Labour while refusing to condemn those closer to home who are really to blame.

## **AMENDMENT:**

**Proposed** by Councillor Green (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Mrs Rennie (3 minutes)

### ***Delete all and insert:***

(1) Council notes with concern the reality of one quarter's reduction in Gross Domestic Product and the very real threat this poses to jobs in Wirral and the local economy.

(2) Council therefore instructs officers to bring an urgent report to the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on measures the Council can take now to support local businesses, for example:

- improving from 30 days to 10 days for the payment to small businesses for goods and services that the Council has received;
- a review of whether parking charges can be reduced or removed at key locations to protect local shops and businesses.

(3) Council further requests that officers work with local businesses and employers to ensure their needs are effectively communicated to central Government.

## **FURTHER AMENDMENT:**

**Proposed** by Councillor Holbrook (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Teggin (3 minutes)

### ***Delete paragraphs (1) and (2) and replace with:***

(1) This Council welcomes the action taken by Gordon Brown and the Government in the current financial crisis and his role in bringing governments together in Europe, and America, to set up the appropriate government intervention and recapitalisation of banks needed to stabilise markets and prevent a financial meltdown that would have devastated the lives of everyone.

***Renumber paragraph (3) as (2), delete the words 'endorses his' and replace with 'welcomes the Government's'.***

### ***Delete remainder of the motion and replace with:***

(3) However, Council notes that the origins of the global financial crisis lie in the progressive de-regulation of the banking and finance industries, which has undermined long-term stability through irresponsible lending and reckless risk taking for short-term profits. Council further notes these policies began in the UK under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, but continued under John Major, and were further supported and developed by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown

(4) Council notes that the current situation has not arisen without forewarning and in particular notes the concerns raised by Vince Cable MP since 2003 about the high levels of personal debt in the UK; notes that his advice on Northern Rock and warnings on the banking crisis have consistently been borne out by events; and

notes that his current advice is for a substantial cut in interest rates to minimise the effects of the impending recession.

(5) Council condemns the Conservatives for their outrageous behaviour in attempting to blame Labour and similarly condemns Labour for their failure to acknowledge their share of responsibility.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

### **(3) MOTION: MERSEYSIDE POLICE AUTHORITY ESTATE STRATEGY**

**Proposed** by Councillor Holbrook (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Harney (3 minutes)

(1) This Council notes the Merseyside Police Authority Estate Strategy proposals for the modernisation of its estate in Wirral.

(2) This Council notes in particular that:

- the modernisation is intended to provide buildings that are fit for purpose to deliver policing in the 21st century for the benefit of the people of Wirral;
- the proposals include investment in a new Area Command Centre in Birkenhead, replacing Mortimer Street and Laird Street Police Stations;
- the network of neighbourhood stations will be maintained;
- there is a commitment to maintaining current response times.

(3) This Council also notes that its own Strategic Asset Review is under way.

(4) This Council therefore welcomes the Merseyside Police Authority's commitment to the modernisation of its estate and the considerable investment in Wirral, and looks forward to working with the Merseyside Police Authority to determine the most mutually beneficial use of the assets of both authorities in the Borough including the use of community rooms in Police Authority or Council buildings.

#### **AMENDMENT:**

**Proposed** by Councillor Leah Fraser (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Blakeley (3 minutes)

#### ***Add the following to the motion:***

(5) This Council recognises and applauds the invaluable work that Merseyside Police has done, and continues to do, to drive down crime in Wirral.

(6) This Council recognises that much of the success of the reduction in crime has come about as a result of close neighbourhood and community policing and the relationships and trust built up with communities, elected members and partner agencies.

(7) Council therefore, while welcoming Merseyside Police's commitment to the modernisation of its estate strategy, requests that a commitment is given by them

that, when reviewing their strategy, no further communities will lose their police station.

(8) Council further asks that any changes to the current location of response vehicles do not result in any potential increases in response times or any lack of response.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Holbrook (7 minutes)

#### **(4) OBJECTION: CABINET MINUTE 219 (PROJECTED BUDGET 2009-2011)**

**Proposed** by Councillor Green (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Mrs Rennie (3 minutes)

(1) This Council notes the proposed cuts brought forward by the Cabinet and further notes:

- the shameful betrayal of residents by the Liberal Democrats, of those people who had signed their petition to retain the Eric Service as a free service. Council believes that the increases in incidents of 'fly tipping', witnessed when a charge was previously levied, will reoccur with the resulting impact on Wirral's environment;
- the road safety impact that the removal of school crossing patrols at 18 locations across Wirral will have and the genuine concern that this will raise with parents and residents for children's safety;
- the spiteful way in which Council's support for Christmas lights has been removed and the charges for school music lessons increased.

(2) Council also objects to the way the Cabinet has sought to treat some of our most vulnerable young people by reducing funding for out-of-borough placements.

(3) Council reaffirms its belief that bringing youngsters back to Wirral should only be done when a safe and secure placement that fully meets an individual child's needs can be secured, rather than cutting the budget and 'going from there'.

(4) Council further notes the lack of information provided at Cabinet relating to the number of redundancies that the cuts contained in their proposal will create and believes this omission to be evidence of the callous approach that is being taken by the ruling Labour/Liberal Democrat administration to the Council's workforce.

(5) Council therefore refuses to accept any of the cuts contained in minute 219 of Cabinet on 16 October 2008.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Foulkes (7 minutes)

#### **(5) MOTION: NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE**

**Proposed** by Councillor Stapleton (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor McLachlan (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council notes that:
- 2008 marks the tenth anniversary of this Labour Government's passing of the National Minimum Wage Act;
  - around one million workers across the UK have benefited thanks to a raise in the National Minimum Wage. Workers aged 22 and over will now be paid a minimum of £5.73 an hour; those aged 18-21 will be paid a minimum of £4.77 an hour and those aged 16 and 17 will be paid a minimum of £3.53 an hour;
  - the Government is also proposing a further clampdown on bosses who fail to pay the minimum wage, with tough new penalties set to come into force next April;
  - when David Cameron campaigned against the National Minimum Wage, wages of as little as £1.20 an hour were common and legal. He said that the minimum wage "would send unemployment straight back up". Contrary to his prediction, this Labour Government has delivered a rising minimum wage and more people in work than ever before.

(2) This Council therefore wishes to recognise and celebrate 10 years of the National Minimum Wage as landmark legislation which has helped thousands of Wirral residents and millions of British citizens to maintain a decent standard of living

**Right of reply:** Councillor Stapleton (7 minutes)

#### **(6) MOTION: BICYCLE RECYCLING SCHEME**

**Proposed** by Councillor Jean Quinn (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Gilchrist (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council notes:
- (i) the urgent need to step up our efforts to combat climate change through increased recycling and reduction in car use;
  - (ii) the need to address the serious socio-economic and health inequalities in Wirral;
  - (iii) the need to provide activities and employment and training opportunities for disaffected young people; those not engaged in education, employment or training (NEETS), and those involved with anti-social behaviour.
- (2) This Council believes that cycling can provide a means of cheap and sustainable travel and improve health and well-being, and has the potential to provide disaffected young people with rewarding and enjoyable activities, as well as skills and training.
- (3) This Council also believes that access to cheap bicycles is essential if those who can most benefit from cycling are to be encouraged to become involved.
- (4) This Council notes the growing number of bicycle recycling schemes throughout the country providing access both to affordable bikes and employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged people.
- (5) This Council therefore requests officers to investigate bicycle recycling schemes elsewhere, together with sources of funding, with a view to establishing a Wirral Bicycle Recycling Scheme.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Jean Quinn (7 minutes)

**(7) OBJECTION: CABINET MINUTE 230 (REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION)**

**Proposed** by Councillor Blakeley (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Green (3 minutes)

This Council notes that the Scrutiny Call-in Guidelines have not been subjected to consultation with all elected members and that therefore members have been denied an opportunity to input their thoughts and ideas. Therefore this Council does not accept this change to the Constitution and asks that all elected members be canvassed for their views on this important matter.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Foulkes (7 minutes)

**(8) MOTION: CAMPAIGN FOR GURKHA RIGHTS**

**Proposed** by Councillor Harry Smith (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Walter Smith (3 minutes)

(1) This Council notes that Gurkhas have played an active front line part in the British Army's activities in times of war and peace for nearly 200 years. In this period approximately 300,000 have fought alongside United Kingdom soldiers, with 45,000 of them being either killed or wounded.

(2) Council notes that the Government announced in September 2004 a change in immigration rules that allowed Gurkhas who had served in the British Army to settle in the United Kingdom with their families.

(3) Council notes with concern, however, that this offer has only been extended to cover those Gurkhas who had served at least four years and who had been discharged after 1 July 1997.

(4) Council believes that, given the exceptional service that they have given to the United Kingdom, Gurkhas and their families should be given fast track eligibility for either the right to remain or citizenship.

(5) Council agrees to send this motion to Wirral's MPs to ask for their support and instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Local Government Association asking them to lobby the Government on this matter.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Harry Smith (7 minutes)

**(9) MOTION: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007**

**Proposed** by Councillor Green (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Mrs Rennie (3 minutes)

(1) This Council welcomes the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, giving central government a duty to assist local authorities with new powers and opportunities to promote sustainable and successful local communities and neighbourhoods.

(2) Furthermore, Council welcomes the cross-party support for the Act in the House of Commons and supports Nick Hurd MP in his concerns that “the decline and loss of local services is having a clear and serious impact on the prosperity of local communities”. Locally, in Wirral, this can be seen over many years, under all Governments, in the decisions by a variety of agencies, quangos, public sector organisations and Government departments to reduce or remove local services such as:

- Over half of Wirral post offices closed
- Wards 6 & 7 at Victoria Central Hospital closed
- Remploy’s CCU closed
- Closure of Withens Lane College

(3) This Council recognises the duty for Government to produce a local spending plan that details the overall spending of taxes in an area and welcomes the ‘local policy proposal’ of the Act giving local communities the opportunity, through their council, to put forward ambitious local policy proposals within the overall spending limits.

(4) This Council therefore requests that Cabinet ‘opts in’ to the Sustainable Communities Act and requests from the Community and Customer Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee a detailed plan and recommendation for Cabinet on how Wirral will move forward to determine the nature and level of assistance from Central Government.

**AMENDMENT:**

**Proposed** by Councillor Kelly (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Holbrook (3 minutes)

***Delete paragraphs (2) (3) and (4) and insert:***

(2) Council notes that the Act became law in October 2007 with a cross-party campaign led by David Drew MP (Labour), Nick Hurd MP (Conservative) and Julia Goldsworthy MP (Lib Dem) and supports the bottom-up process in the Sustainable Communities Act designed to allow local authorities and their communities to drive the help that central government gives in reversing community decline and promoting thriving, sustainable communities by giving local authorities the power to make proposals to government on the action government must take to reverse community decline and promote sustainable communities, and argues for a transfer of public money and function from central to local control.

(3) Council notes that the Act defines the sustainability of local communities broadly as:

- the improvement of the local economy;
- protection of the environment;
- promotion of social inclusion; and
- participation in civic and political activity.

(4) Council notes the possible benefits of choosing to opt into the Act:

(i) Assistance from government - the Act gives government a legal duty 'to assist local authorities in promoting the sustainability of local communities'. So by 'opting in' local authorities are signing up to receive that 'assistance'.

(ii) Power to determine that assistance - the Act gives local authorities power to determine the nature of the assistance that they receive from government.

(iii) Transferring functions and monies from central to local control - the Act enables local authorities to request, via the LGA, the transfer of functions from government or government agencies to themselves.

(iv) access to Central Spending Accounts Information - the requirement in the Act for the government to 'open the books' means that local authorities will know how much extra money they can access if they push for a transfer of functions.

***Add new paragraph:***

(5) Council requests officers to conduct an options appraisal on all of the implications of opting into the Act, and report back to the relevant Council committees and the Cabinet.

**FURTHER AMENDMENT:**

**Proposed** by Councillor Foulkes (7 minutes)

**Seconded** by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

***Delete all paragraphs after the first paragraph and insert:***

(2) This Council notes the sudden conversion of the Conservative Party, locally and nationally, to the concept of Community, famously denied when they were previously in power. Council further questions whether this conversion is purely altruistic or merely a cynical vote-catching exercise aimed at marginal wards or constituencies.

(3) Council notes the concern expressed by the Conservatives over the loss of services in the Wallasey Constituency, while failing to recognise new initiatives which benefit the community such as the setting up of new children's centres and the regeneration of the Floral Pavilion, much loved by the community, as well as initiatives such as the Millennium Centre in Leasowe and the new and refurbished PFI schools.

(4) Council recognises that work has already begun on strengthening community involvement with the introduction of the "You Decide" initiative and the participatory budgeting scheme, which give local people real choice on how local authority money is spent in their area, in addition to the Community Fund initiatives already in place for use by the local Area Forums, the Youth Parliament and the Older People's Parliament.

(5) None the less, Council welcomes the cross-party support for the Act in the House of Commons and reaffirms its belief in the importance of Sustainable Communities.

(6) Council therefore asks that a report be taken to the Cabinet which outlines the latest position on the Act and the regulations governing its implementation and sets

out the benefits, financial implications, procedures and timescale for making any community representations to Government for consideration by the agreed selector.

**Right of reply:** Councillor Green (7 minutes)