



## Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Wednesday, 14 November 2012</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.00 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall</b>

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### AGENDA

**1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT  
- DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP**

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Members are reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

**2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 8)**

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2012.

**3. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION  
- MEMBER OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

**4. TRADE CENTRE SCRUTINY REVIEW (Pages 9 - 40)**

**5. WELFARE REFORM AND UNDER OCCUPATION - DRAFT SCOPE DOCUMENT FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEW (Pages 41 - 50)**

**6. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 51 - 60)**

**7. FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the period November 2012 to February 2013 has now been published on the Council's intranet/website. Members are invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider, having regard to the work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

**8. REGENERATION UPDATE (PART 1)**

**9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR (PART 1)**

**10. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The public may 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.

RECOMMENDED – That in accordance with section 100A (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 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

**11. REGENERATION UPDATE (PART 2)**

**12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR (PART 2)**

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

Wednesday, 5 September 2012

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	M Johnston (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Cox P Kearney R Gregson D Realey	M Sullivan S Whittingham J Williamson
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	D Dodd (In place of J Stapleton) D Elderton (In place of A Hodson)	
<u>Cabinet Member:</u>	Councillor	P Hackett	

### **15 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP**

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor Darren Dodd declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Town Centres Update (see minute 22 post) as he was a member of the Central Liscard Town Team, which had submitted an albeit unsuccessful bid for Government Town Team funding.

### **16 MINUTES**

The Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management submitted the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2012. The Chair commented that the first meeting of the Green Economy Working Group (minute 7 refers), which was formed to support the development of the Green Economy, would be held on 27 September 2012.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June, 2012, be approved.**
- (2) That the Conservative Group be requested to advise the Chair of its nominee to the Green Economy Working Group.**

17 **BUSINESS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION - MEMBER OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

The Chair advised that he had invited David Downing, Chairman of drivecompare, to give a presentation to Members, to highlight the issues that affected his business and to indicate the factors that led to it being located in Wirral.

David outlined the nature of his business which essentially, aimed to connect learner drivers to instructors. He commented upon the car driver training market and, particularly upon the challenges faced by independent and small schools which, with 85% of active instructors often struggled to attract pupils, with stiff competition from large franchised driving schools. New learner drivers readily embraced new technology, often more so than instructors and David advised that drivecompare's core service offering was to provide new learner drivers and a software platform for driving schools and instructors. The software business service package included the use of social media, diary management, lesson progress and reports and analysis. It also provided essential learner resources, including theory questions, hazard perception advice, videos and driver games. In response to comments from Members in relation to instructor rating, David indicated that the star rating was based entirely on feedback from pupils, although there was an opportunity for instructors to challenge negative feedback. The feedback data also enabled drivecompare to provide an evaluation to instructors and schools with a clear indication of what aspects of their driver training needed to be improved.

David advised that as the software had been developed in Edinburgh, there had been initial contact with Scottish Enterprise before a decision was taken to locate the Head Office and Contact Centre in Liverpool. However, he had found the processes for start-up businesses to be very complex with various funding streams ultimately being unavailable. He advised that it was a chance contact with the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning at an event in Bromborough that led to him being put in touch with Invest Wirral. He praised the team, who had taken time to understand the business model and had focused on his immediate needs namely, premises, recruitment and HR systems. He had also received support from Job Centre Plus and the Apprentice Scheme and was pleased to advise that the company's Head Office and Contact Centre were now located at the Price Street Business Centre. A soft launch had taken place on 2 August 2012 with staff having been recruited from the local area.

In response to a question from Members as to what could be done better in engaging with start-up businesses, he commented that, elsewhere, he had received too much information, much of it either not relevant or, ultimately funding being unavailable. Many people setting up a small business were unaware of what they needed and David commented that his experience with Invest Wirral was that the guidance offered was focused and relevant.

**Resolved – That the thanks of the Committee be accorded to David Downing for his informative presentation and best wishes for the continuing success of drivecompare.**

18 **BUDGET CONSULTATION - SCRUTINY WORKSHOPS**

By way of a presentation, the Council's Corporate Performance Manager referred to a series of budget consultation Scrutiny Workshops that had been arranged during September and October, to consult on principles and to engage with the public, staff and stakeholders to inform improvements and budgets and the development of the

three year Corporate and Financial Plans. Outline savings options would be the subject of further consultation in November/December prior to decisions.

She commented that the Authority faced a significant challenge in dealing with government cuts to its budget, adding up to around £100m over the next three years. A public questionnaire, together with detailed background information would be released on 10 September 2012 and the Scrutiny Workshops would seek the views of Members, external partners and experts, as to how the Council's priorities may be achieved in the light of budget cuts. They would look in detail at the budgets within their remit and report back to the Cabinet. Their scope was to understand the scale of the challenge and to discuss options for delivering services differently.

In response to comments from Members, the Director provided assurance that officers would take steps to ensure that a fully representative response was sought to the options within the consultation exercise, including hard to reach groups. Members' involvement in the process was crucial and he proposed to circulate the background information to Members, prior to the publication of the questionnaire.

The Chair indicated that the Economy and Regeneration Workshop would take place on Tuesday 25 September 2012 and he urged Members to attend if it was possible for them to do so.

**Resolved – That the presentation be noted.**

#### 19 **TRADE CENTRE SCRUTINY REVIEW: UPDATE**

Further to minute 8 (7 June 2012), the Chair and Members of the Trade Centre Scrutiny Panel provided an update upon progress in relation to the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review, which aimed to provide an informed response to the Notice of Motion, approved by the Council on 16 April 2012. Panel Members had considered the scope of the Scrutiny Review and had recommended that it should focus on the following issues –

- What is the provision of local services available to Wirral companies as they prepare to trade with new companies and emerging markets?
- How can Inward Investors be made to feel most welcome in Wirral?
- What are the business support needs of companies operating in the International Trade Centre?
- How is the International Trade Centre to be marketed and what role can the Council play?
- How can cultural links be developed?
- What are the issues regarding language and education barriers/opportunities?
- What needs to be done to ensure adequate cultural awareness and training among Council officers and members?

Members considered the methods to gather evidence that had been identified by the Panel and the Chair indicated that the final report was expected to be completed before the end of 2012.

**Resolved – That the progress to date be noted and the Scope for the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review, be approved.**

## 20 **QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning presented a report, which set out performance of the Council's Corporate Plan 2011-2014, for April – June 2012. The report provided an overview of performance, resource and risk monitoring and detailed the performance of projects and performance indicators that were relevant to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, under the Corporate Plan themes of 'Your Economy' and 'Your Neighbourhood'. The report provided details of 'What's working well', exceptions in performance against Corporate Plan targets (projects that were awaiting data or that had missed their targets and been assessed as red or amber) and resource implications. Future challenges and risks were also highlighted for each Corporate Plan theme. Members referred to the challenges associated with the achievement of income targets within planning and building control and expressed a view that more realistic targets should be set.

The Director reported also that, as a result of Cabinet decisions to date, the projected General Fund balance at 31 March 2013 was £14m. In addition, slippage agreed by the Cabinet of approximately £34m for a series of schemes within the 2011/2012 Capital Programme had resulted in an increased 2012/2013 programme. Forecasts based upon the first quarter's position indicated that there would be further slippage from 2012/2013 into following years. A number of schemes within DASS, Regeneration Housing and Planning and Law, HR and Asset Management were likely to be rephased with some expenditure in later years. Expenditure on disabled facility grants within the year was also likely to be lower than the original approval.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted.**
- (2) That a report be presented to a future meeting regarding the Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme.**
- (3) That the thanks of the Committee be accorded –**
  - (i). to the Invest Wirral Team for their work in exceeding targets for membership of the Wirral Business Forum and;**
  - (ii). to the Warmer Wirral Team for the insulation scheme, which received national recognition by winning an award at the 2012 Gas Industry Awards.**

## 21 **FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS' REGENERATION/HOUSING TOUR - 3 JULY 2012**

The Chair referred to the Regeneration/Housing Tour, which took place on 3 July 2012 and thanked the officers for the detailed and informative itinerary. Members were pleased to see areas of significant improvement and progress, particularly in the North End area of Birkenhead and in other parts of the Borough. In response to comments from Members, with regard to the relativity of deprivation in parts of West Wirral, the Director indicated that high levels of deprivation were not confined to the East of Wirral and that regeneration was required in wards across the Borough.

**Resolved – That the thanks of the Committee be accorded to the officers for the detailed and informative Regeneration/Housing Tour.**

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning provided an update report on Wirral's retail shopping centres, which focused particularly upon the challenges they were facing and the initiatives that were being pursued to support them. He commented that there were a number of external constraints that needed to be considered in respect of supporting the development of sustainable shopping centres and national reports had shown that across the country there was an over-capacity issue in the market, resulting from matters such as the growth in the use of the internet for shopping, banking, travel and betting.

The impact of the global economic recession and difficult trading conditions that were prevalent across the Country were also being faced by traders in Wirral and the increased number of vacant shops could not be solved quickly due to the complexity of issues which affected the shopping patterns of people and the ability of businesses to continue trading.

The Director outlined the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework issued in March 2012 and highlighted the importance of local shopping centres. However, whilst the Council had, and continued to support as many shopping areas as it could, it was not an issue that the Council could solve in isolation and required the support and involvement of local traders to drive and deliver many elements, as well as the local community to rally and support their local businesses. Wirral was a member of the Association of Town Centre Managers and the Director highlighted a number of initiatives developed by the Association, in conjunction with recommendations from the review undertaken by Mary Portas (the Government's advisor on the high street) upon issues affecting shopping areas.

The Director referred to the hierarchy of shopping centres in Wirral that had been updated as a result of consultation as part of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy process and he commented upon the range of issues that were to be addressed by shopping centre action plans.

He provided an update with regard to the work of the Local Town Teams and commented that there were a number of areas with very high percentages of empty shops that were significantly higher than the national average. There had been a number of projects for empty shops funding that had been used primarily to support the costs of refurbishment, to bring them back into use and to contribute towards the first year rental costs. However, an increasing number of shops had been converted to residential use and work was being undertaken in relation to use classes to ensure that such conversions were appropriate.

In response to concerns expressed by Members with regard to the increasing numbers of vacant shops opening as bookmakers or payday loan shops, the Director confirmed that planners were asked to look at the impact of such proposals on local communities. Members also expressed their disappointment that none of the Wirral bids for town team funding had been successful, whilst noting that the funding that might have been made available would not have been sufficient to secure real and lasting improvement to Wirral's shopping centres.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the partnership work being undertaken to address the complex issues in Wirral's Town Centres, be noted.**
- (2) That the Strategy for Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure, produced by Roger Tym & Partners in 2009 be circulated to Members.**
- (3) That progress reports be presented to future meetings of the Committee upon the Deep Clean Scheme and the operation of the Free after Three parking scheme.**
- (4) That an evaluation of projects for Empty Shops funding, be presented to the Committee after twelve months of operation.**
- (5) That further reports be presented to a future meeting of the Committee upon the progress of the Shopping Centre Action Plans.**

**23 UPDATE ON INVESTMENT MANAGER POST**

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning provided Members with an update in relation to the appointment of Investment Manager. He indicated that following a recruitment exercise, the post had been offered to the most suitable candidate. However, the offer had been declined and the post was not subsequently offered to any of the other candidates. The duties of the post continued to be undertaken by existing staff and the Director awaited instruction as to how to proceed.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

**24 REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN**

Further to minute 12 (7 June 2012), the Chair indicated that he had sought the views of Members as to what issues should form the basis of the Committee's work programme and he outlined the issues that had already been identified for scrutiny.

He referred also to minute 7 of the Scrutiny Programme Board held on 18 July 2012, which requested Scrutiny Chairs and spokespersons to review their work programmes to prioritise work consistently with the Council's Corporate Plan, and to consider also, the work programmes of other scrutiny committees to identify areas of work that involved, or potentially involved, cross-cutting issues and/or clear synergies (in law, fact or issue) with areas within their own work programme. The Chair commented that the only area he had identified as a cross-cutting theme was in relation to the Child Poverty Strategy and he sought the views of Members as to whether it should be undertaken by the Children and Young People O&S Committee. However, the Director commented that economic issues were a key contributory factor to child poverty.

The Forward Plan for the period September to December, 2012 was published on the Council's intranet/website and Members had been invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider, having regard to its work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.



**Resolved –**

**(1) That the Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year be agreed, subject to the inclusion of the following items –**

- **Further scrutiny work being undertaken on the impact of Welfare Reform on both private and social housing sectors and in particular, on under-occupancy in the social sector (minute 49 (8 March 2012) refers).**
- **A further update upon the effect of the economy on Youth Unemployment.**

**(2) That the Scrutiny Programme Board be thanked for its referral and be advised that the potential cross-cutting theme of Child Poverty should remain within the remit of the Economy and Regeneration O&S Committee. (10:0)**

**(3) That the Forward Plan be noted.**

**25 REGENERATION UPDATE (PART 1)**

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning provided an update on major development schemes within the Borough. Members commented that all development schemes should have regard to their implications for voluntary, community and faith groups and the use of grant funding.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

**26 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**Resolved – That in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.**

**27 REGENERATION UPDATE (PART 2)  
(Exempt by virtue of paragraph 3)**

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning provided a further update on major development schemes within the Borough and referred specifically to grants awarded under the Think Big initiative, and to the provision of high speed broadband.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

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## WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 NOVEMBER 2012

#### REPORT OF THE TRADE CENTRE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL MEMBERS

#### TRADE CENTRE SCRUTINY REVIEW – FINAL REPORT

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides background information regarding the Final Report of the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Council Notice of Motion  
Council, on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012, unanimously agreed a Notice of Motion which included the following:

*“Council therefore calls on the three Parties to agree membership for a 1:1:1 Member Working Party, reporting to the Economy and Regeneration OSC. This Working Party will scope a project leading to recommendations to ensure this Council and its partners are Trade Centre Ready and able to embrace all opportunities for development through its growing links with China and other countries and that potential barriers to businesses and investors are identified and recommendations made as to how these can be overcome”.*

#### 1.2 Panel Membership

As a result, at the meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2012, members agreed to undertake an in-depth scrutiny review to produce an informed response to the Notice of Motion. A Panel of Members was formed, the membership of which was:

- Councillor Mark Johnston (Chair)
- Councillor Andrew Hodson
- Councillor Jean Stapleton

The Panel has been supported by a Scrutiny Support Officer, Alan Veitch.

#### 2. Scope of the Review

- 2.1 Subsequent to the Committee meeting in June, the Panel Members proposed that the review should consider a number of key areas. The Scope Document for the scrutiny review was agreed by the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2012.

- 2.2 It was agreed that the review would concentrate on the following issues:
- What is the provision of local services available to Wirral companies as they prepare to trade with new companies and emerging markets?
  - How can Inward Investors be made to feel most welcome in Wirral?
  - What are the business support needs of companies operating in the International Trade Centre?
  - How is the International Trade Centre to be marketed and what role can the Council play?
  - How can cultural links be developed?
  - What are the issues regarding language and education barriers / opportunities?
  - What needs to be done to ensure adequate cultural awareness and training among Council officers and members?

### 3 **Evidence Gathering and the Report**

- 3.1 The Panel Members have met with a number of Council officers in addition to a series of visits to discuss relevant issues with representatives of organisations external to the Council, including some members of the voluntary and community sector.

The Panel members express their thanks to all those who have assisted the review by so readily giving their time, experience and suggestions.

- 3.2 The Final Report, 'Preparations for the International Trade Centre in Wirral', which includes nineteen recommendations, is attached for consideration by the Committee.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) Members are requested to support the contents and recommendations of the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review;
- (2) The Trade Centre Scrutiny Report should be referred to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting;
- (3) Further reports will be presented to the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update members regarding the progress being made towards the implementation of the recommendations.

#### **Report of the Trade Centre Scrutiny Panel Members:**

**Cllr Mark Johnston (Chair)**

**Cllr Andrew Hodson**

**Cllr Jean Stapleton**

**SCRUTINY REVIEW of PREPARATIONS FOR  
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE IN WIRRAL**

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2014

*Wirral welcomes you in 2014*

*A report produced by*  
**THE ECONOMY & REGENERATION  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PREPARATIONS FOR  
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE  
IN WIRRAL**

**SCRUTINY REVIEW**

**FINAL REPORT**

	<i>Page</i>
<b>1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 COMMENTS FROM PANEL MEMBERS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3 BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4 METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5 EVIDENCE FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>5.1 The concept of the International Trade Centre .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5.2 Budget and organisational Issues.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5.3 Opportunities for existing Wirral businesses.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5.4 Making Inward Investors welcome.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5.5 ITC business support needs .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5.6 Marketing.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5.7 Development of cultural links .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5.8 Language and education.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5.9 Council Officers' / Members' cultural awareness and training.....</b>	<b>24</b>

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**APPENDICES**

1 Scope Document.....	26
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**TABLES**

1 Number of EAL (English as an Additional Language) Children in Wirral (as at Jan 2012).....	23
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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel Members have gained an understanding of the enormous effort that has taken place in order to put Wirral in the position where significant and lasting inward investment is a real possibility. The International Trade Centre (ITC) is due to open during 2014 which will hopefully provide the impetus for further investment in the wider Wirral Waters project. With that investment will come jobs. The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning, Kevin Adderley, has led the team on behalf of the Council which has worked with the lead partners, Peel Holdings and Sam Wa International. The Panel Members fully recognise the contribution of that team. During this Scrutiny Review, it has also been pointed out that the cross-party political support for the concept of the International Trade Centre has been crucial in providing the platform for effective decision-making to take place. The Peel Group has formed a partnership with a Chinese company, Sam Wa International, to deliver the ITC. The contribution of the Council's two partners in the development is also recognised and welcomed. The Panel Members believe that the ITC is a good news story for Wirral.

**What is the International Trade Centre?** - The purpose of the ITC will be to facilitate the promotion and sales of goods to the wholesale market of the UK and the rest of Europe. The Trade Centre will enable up to 1,000 separate companies from China, India, South Korea or other emerging economies to exhibit, sell, assemble and distribute their goods into the UK, Irish and European market. The International Trade Centre will be based on a series of four buildings with a total floor space of 230,000 square metres (2,500,000 square feet). It will be constructed on land at West Float, Birkenhead. The first of the four buildings, Phase 1, will be 600,000 square feet in size and is expected to provide a base for up to 300 new overseas businesses. Ground clearance has already commenced and Phase 1 of the development is scheduled to open during 2014.

**Should the ITC be a priority for the Council?** - Panel Members are aware of the extreme financial conditions which currently face the Council and understand that budget savings must be made. Difficult decisions will be needed. However, the Council's Corporate Plan states that "Creating and safeguarding jobs and attracting new investment" is one of the leading priorities. The International Trade Centre provides Wirral with an enormous opportunity. As well as welcoming many overseas companies to the Borough, there is the possibility of over 2000 jobs being created for UK-based employees. Furthermore, there is the prospect that the ITC could provide the impetus for further investment and job creation in the longer term through the Wirral Waters project. The Panel Members have, therefore, concluded that the success of the ITC should be considered to be a high priority for the Authority and that this should be reflected in the Council's budgetary process.

This Report provides a view of the current position of the Council's part in the ITC project. However, the project is developing and requirements will change. It is, therefore, necessary that the Council is able to adapt to and support those changing requirements. Due to the high profile of the ITC project, the Panel Members propose that a member-led Working Group should be formed to support that process. There are many unknowns relating to the planning for the project. As tenants for Phase 1 of the project are still being acquired, the nature of the companies plus the numbers of overseas employees and family members moving to Wirral remain unknown. Therefore, detailed planning remains difficult.

**What are the needs of businesses in the ITC?** - Evidence gathered during the Review suggests that the majority of business needs of the ITC tenants will be met through Peel Holdings. A management team, provided by Peel, will be permanently situated within the ITC complex. This in-house Peel team will permanently manage the site and be available to talk to the tenants. In addition, Invest Wirral already provides a highly regarded service to Wirral-based businesses. It is anticipated that any specific business support which is required from the Council will be provided through that channel. Once further planning has taken place, a view will need to be taken on the capacity of the core team at Invest Wirral to take on any additional workload.

**What support will be required for employees from overseas?** - The support needs for companies and their employees are likely to differ depending on individual needs. However, evidence emerged during the Review of backing for the establishment of 'soft landing' support. The concept is based upon the provision of a single point of contact to assist employees in making arrangements, for example, with accommodation and school requirements. It is likely that much of the support will result in sign-posting to relevant organisations for services which may, in some cases, already exist. At this stage, the precise requirements are uncertain. Once companies have become established as tenants of the ITC, these requirements will become clearer and will enable further detailed planning to take place.

In addition to the 'soft-landing' support, it is proposed that a detailed information pack is produced. It appears that much useful information is already available but needs to be coordinated in a centralised form. Although a limited amount of material may be required in hard copy, it is proposed that the majority of the information should be made available on websites or via download and that at least some should be translated into major alternative languages.

The point was made by several witnesses that the personal welcome from work colleagues and neighbours is very important. For newcomers to the UK, personal contact will be critical and it is, therefore, suggested that a team of volunteers could be assembled to show newcomers what it is like to be British by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. The Panel Members are, therefore, proposing the formation of a group of UK-based volunteers, 'International Welcomers', acting as cultural ambassadors, to showcase British food and culture. It is also important that the existing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Wirral, including the Chinese community, are given the opportunity to act as ambassadors and buddies to the new arrivals.

**What are the opportunities for Wirral businesses?** - From the perspective of Wirral businesses, the biggest advantage of the International Trade Centre will be the many major businesses and business people on the doorstep. This will open up opportunities to trade. Equally, there will be some opportunities for service industries that will arise. Further work needs to be done to identify those opportunities which may be suitable for Wirral businesses. Invest Wirral currently hosts networks for Wirral-based businesses, delivered via the BusinessWirral.com website. It is suggested that once the new opportunities arising from the ITC are identified, these are discussed further within the Business Forums / networks. Opportunities for businesses to apply for 'preferred partner' status for the ITC may also arise. As a result, it may be possible for workshops to be provided, aimed at business people providing services such as car hire and hotels to help alleviate language and cultural barriers.

**How can cultural links be developed and celebrated?** - The International Business Festival, which is being led by Liverpool, but of which Wirral is a partner, is due to be held in July 2014. This will hopefully coincide approximately with the opening of the ITC. Although the Business Festival is not a cultural event in itself, it will, however, provide the opportunity for cultural events such as dragon boat racing to run alongside and to promote cultural issues. This will be a great opportunity to showcase different communities to the rest of Wirral. It is worth noting that the meetings held during this Review revealed very low knowledge amongst those participants regarding the twinning arrangements that are in place with Wirral Council.

There are organisations in Wirral that work directly with the BME communities. Among these groups are Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation, both of whom provide a rich resource for the Borough. As the detailed planning for the 'soft-landing' takes place, it may well be that such community groups will be well placed to provide some of the services that will be required when the overseas employees arrive at the ITC. The Council will need to be clear on those requirements. From the Council's perspective, although there are a number of contracts already in place with both organisations, the precise detail of all of those contracts was not clear to the Panel Members. The relationship between the Council and these organisations also did not appear to be on an outcome-led basis. It is, therefore, suggested that a review should take place to identify a clear understanding of the current contractual arrangements, explore the future requirements and create an environment where greater emphasis is placed on measurable outcomes of the services provided.



**What are the implications of the ITC for education?** - As the lead investors are Chinese, it is fair to assume that, although not exclusively so, the initial wave of tenants in the ITC will include a proportion of Chinese companies. Although employees arriving from China are likely to be English speakers, this may not necessarily be the case with family members. In addition, the ITC may provide job opportunities for Wirral people. The ability to communicate in Mandarin may well be a useful skill for future job seekers.

Teaching of Mandarin is already available across a number of schools in Wirral. The language is already taught at Calday Grange Grammar School and Upton Hall School. The experience of Calday Grange Grammar School is of particular interest, where the school has become established as an Advanced Confucius Classroom, a status recognised by the Chinese Government authorities. Within the school, 40 pupils have studied Mandarin to GCSE Level in 2011/12. The Confucius Classroom also provides the resource to teach Mandarin in primary schools, aimed at children in Year 2 upwards. Chinese language, culture, arts and crafts are already taught in 25 primary schools in Wirral via this outreach arrangement. With regard to other schools, in the future, it is possible that the increasing use of the English Baccalaureate will lead to more teaching of languages as the Baccalaureate requires an A\*-C in a foreign language. However, in the past, changing the curriculum has not happened quickly.

Planning will need to take place regarding the education requirements of children moving to Wirral from overseas as a result of the Trade Centre opening. The current school admission policy is lengthy. It will, therefore, be necessary to address issues relating to the timing and the length of the schools' admission process when employees and their families may arrive at relatively short notice. It is also likely that schools are not yet widely aware of the International Trade Centre and the implications for education. As an example, the business needs of companies operating in the ITC will create new jobs, which may require some new skills including language skills. It is, therefore, suggested that an awareness process takes place with the schools in the Borough.

If family members arrive in Wirral with little English language knowledge, it should be the case that existing services will be in place to support those families and children. The MEAS service (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) is a well-established service in Wirral, being part of the Council's Children and Young People's Department. The MEAS team was formerly funded by a Direct Government Grant to the Council. However, the grant is now allocated directly to schools. A review has recently taken place regarding the future requirements of schools. Final decisions will be made in January 2013. It will be important that the MEAS team is able to demonstrate its worth to the schools across the Borough to guarantee continued support from as many schools as possible in order to maintain the funding.

**What about Council officers and Members?** - During this Review, it has been made clear that those UK citizens associated with the ITC project who have visited China have been made to feel extremely welcome. It is important that visiting delegations from China and other countries are made to feel equally welcome. This is of particular relevance to the Council when delegations are visiting municipal buildings, such as Wallasey Town Hall or Birkenhead Town Hall. Relatively small measures, such as a welcome in the language of the visitors can make a difference. Equally, Council officers should do what they can to understand and respond positively to challenges arising from cultural differences. It is important that potential inward investors are shown priority and, therefore, unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided wherever possible.

The Panel Members also agreed that it would be helpful if a larger cohort of Council Members had a greater understanding of the vision for the International Trade Centre and beyond. It is suggested that informal meetings with Lindsey Ashworth of Peel Holdings in addition to the appointment of an ITC Champion would help to raise the profile of the ITC project among the Members.

In considering the evidence found during the Review, the Panel Members have formulated the recommendations identified on pages 6 to 8.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 1 – The International Trade Centre as a Council priority**

The International Trade Centre is recognised as a great opportunity for the Borough and consequently is a high priority for the Council. Despite the extreme financial conditions faced by the Authority, the preparations for the Trade Centre should formally be reflected as a high priority within the Council's budgetary process.

*(Reference Section 5.2, page 14)*

### **Recommendation 2 – Relationships**

The Panel Members urge that strong consideration be given to ensure a consistent and relational-based approach is maintained with regard to the existing partners engaged in the ITC project.

*(Reference Section 5.2, page 14)*

### **Recommendation 3 – Creation of a member-led Working Group to oversee the delivery of the Trade Centre project**

Due to the high profile of the International Trade Centre project, a member-led Working Group should be created to oversee the implementation of the recommendations from this Scrutiny Review and, in the longer term, the delivery of the ITC project from the Council's perspective.

*(Reference Section 5.2, page 15)*

### **Recommendation 4 - The gathering of corporate and individual requirements from prospective tenants**

As soon as tenants for the International Trade Centre have been recruited, Wirral Council and Peel Holdings should work together to determine the corporate and individual requirements of those who will be moving to Wirral. The resulting information will inform social needs, such as for housing and education, and will enable more detailed planning to take place.

*(Reference Section 5.2, page 15)*

### **Recommendation 5 – Official opening of the International Trade Centre**

The International Trade Centre will create the greatest concentration of foreign-owned businesses in the UK and will provide a major boost to the economy in Wirral and the Liverpool City Region. To mark an event of significance to the UK economy, consideration should be given to an invitation being made to a member of the Royal Family and/or a senior Government figure to open the Trade Centre.

*(Reference Section 5.2, page 15)*

### **Recommendation 6 – Provision of information regarding opportunities for existing Wirral businesses**

The opportunities arising from the International Trade Centre for existing Wirral businesses can best be disseminated by use of the existing Wirral Business Forums, which are already coordinated by Invest Wirral on BusinessWirral.com. Consideration should be given to the creation of a preferred partners' list for the International Trade Centre. Wirral businesses could be given the opportunity to apply for 'preferred partner' status for a range of services from taxis to hotels. In return, appropriate training in language, cultural and business etiquette could be offered to such businesses.

*(Reference Section 5.3, page 16)*

### **Recommendation 7 – 'Soft-landing' support**

Consideration should be given to establishing a Council-led 'soft-landing' support team which will be available to those companies and employees relocating from overseas to Wirral. In due course, further to the determination of exact requirements, a report should be produced for Cabinet to explain the purpose and proposed delivery of the support. The required support is likely to provide sign-posting for issues such as:

- Accommodation
- Education and schools
- Health issues
- Information on NHS provision and medical insurance
- Preferred partners for insurance

- Police registration (for visa requirements)
- Point of contact with the 'International Welcomer' volunteers
- Recruitment of staff for the new companies
- Driving instruction
- Cultural advice and support
- General queries and advice

The increased business rates which will be available to Wirral Council as a result of Enterprise Zone status could be used to facilitate the 'soft-landing' support team. Such a team would be time-limited based around the need to manage the significant influx of new residents and ensure they have the best possible start to their new life on the Wirral. All of our investigation points to the importance of relational-based support within eastern cultures.

*(Reference Section 5.4, page 17)*

### **Recommendation 8 – Information Pack**

An Information Pack will be produced. The Pack will provide practical information and will be available to newcomers and those planning to move to Wirral. The information should be available primarily via a website. Consideration should also be given to the development of a Wirral App from which relevant information could be downloaded. The Information Pack will be translated into major alternative languages, for example, Mandarin.

*(Reference Section 5.4, page 18)*

### **Recommendation 9 – The 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers**

An 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers should be created to provide new arrivals from overseas with British cultural experiences while showcasing Wirral. The volunteer team will enable new arrivals to be familiarised with British culture by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. The 'International Welcomer' team should include the recruitment of students / families of Wirral schools who teach languages such as Mandarin. This will enable those students to have the opportunity to improve their language skills at the same time as providing a valuable service.

*(Reference Section 5.4, page 18)*

### **Recommendation 10 – Birkenhead Town Hall and environs**

As Birkenhead Town Hall is likely to be the base for Peel's marketing team in Wirral, it is important that steps are taken by Wirral Council to create a secure, safe and welcoming environment for the many overseas visitors who are likely to visit. This would be enhanced by the Council supporting the introduction of a 'Friends of Hamilton Square' Group.

*(Reference Section 5.4, page 18)*

### **Recommendation 11 – Awareness-raising of the benefits to Wirral of the International Trade Centre**

The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to work closely with Peel Holdings in order to stress the positive aspects of the International Trade Centre for Wirral's residents.

*(Reference Section 5.6, page 20)*

### **Recommendation 12 – Events to celebrate cultural diversity**

In order to celebrate Wirral's cultural diversity, both large and small-scale cultural events should be held in Wirral to coincide with the International Business Festival and to celebrate the opening of the International Trade Centre. The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to ensure that Wirral's BME communities, Neighbourhood Forums and young people, particularly through schools, play a central role in the planning of these events. The successful model of the community-based Big Lunches could be used to encourage cultural street parties throughout the Borough.

*(Reference Section 5.7, page 20)*

### **Recommendation 13 – Review of services provided by Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change**

The contribution of both Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change to residents in Wirral is recognised and welcomed. However, further clarity regarding the expectations of both the Council and these partners relating to service provision and funding would be beneficial. Therefore, a full service review, including current contractual arrangements, should be undertaken. The review should lead to a greater emphasis on measurable outcomes for the services provided.

*(Reference Section 5.7, page 21)*

### **Recommendation 14 – Volunteering opportunities**

Consideration should be given to ways of involving the family members of those newly-arrived overseas employees in the life of Wirral. This will involve the encouragement of volunteering among those family members in projects such as the MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) Volunteering Scheme and opportunities with Wirral Multicultural Organisation, Wirral Change and the wider voluntary sector.

*(Reference Section 5.7, page 21)*

### **Recommendation 15 – The awareness of the International Trade Centre within schools**

The Director of Children and Young People's Department is requested to raise awareness of the International Trade Centre with headteachers and school governors regarding:

- The possibility of a number of new students arriving throughout the academic year;
- New job opportunities which may arise in Wirral, particularly for those with the right skills, including relevant language knowledge. Consideration should be given to ensuring that required skills for jobs in the ITC influence the development of the curriculum;
- Opportunities for schools to get involved in the cultural events being planned to coincide with the International Business Festival and the opening of the International Trade Centre. (See Recommendation 12)

*(Reference Section 5.8, page 23)*

### **Recommendation 16 – Awareness of the Council's Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS)**

The Director of Children and Young People's Department is requested to ensure that all schools are made fully aware of the potential increase in the number of children from overseas arriving in Wirral and the potential impact on the Council's Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS). The Schools Forum may be a helpful mechanism.

*(Reference Section 5.8, page 24)*

### **Recommendation 17 – A warm welcome in Wirral**

Delegations from overseas must be made to feel welcome in Wirral and especially at Council buildings, including Wallasey Town Hall. An appropriate visible welcome should be provided including cultural displays which may present the opportunity for school involvement.

*(Reference Section 5.9, page 25)*

### **Recommendation 18 – Members' meetings with Lindsey Ashworth**

Opportunities should be explored to give all Council members the opportunity to meet and discuss relevant issues with the Development Director of Peel Holding, Lindsey Ashworth.

*(Reference Section 5.9, page 25)*

### **Recommendation 19 – Appointment of an ITC Champion**

Wirral Council should appoint an ITC Champion to help increase the profile of the International Trade Centre within the Council and to help plan for the Council's involvement in the successful delivery of the project.

*(Reference Section 5.9, page 25)*

## **2. COMMENTS FROM PANEL MEMBERS**

***Councillor Mark Johnston (Chair)***



It is not over dramatic to say that the International Trade Centre presents itself as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Wirral. Peel's commitment, investment and vision have found a willing partner in the Council who are ready to embrace a golden opportunity. A significant influx of developing market companies has the potential to create sustainable employment, provide opportunities for existing Wirral businesses and attract visitors from all over the world. It could also unlock vital investment to turn the dream of Wirral Waters into bricks and mortar and see the re-birth of a once thriving hub of enterprise.

Increased Business Rates, increased demand for housing, the added purchasing power of new residents, improving our GVA (Gross Value Added), growing a reputation as a great place to do business, regeneration impacting on our key deprivation issues such as child poverty and unemployment, investment into the east of the Borough and richer cultural diversity are just a few of the value added benefits of the ITC.

One of the most impressive things about the ITC and Wirral Waters is the total unity that the project has inspired. The far-sighted decisions to invest into relationships and not skimp on this development are a credit to several former leaders of the Council and key Council officers.

As a community we stand on the brink of something with the potential to positively impact the whole of the Borough. The Council must be the community leader on this project and we should be rightly proud and be bold in telling everyone the good news of the ITC.

This story of hope and potential is taking place against a back drop of worldwide recession, national budget cuts and a set of challenges facing local government that is unprecedented. It is truly remarkable that this development is taking place given the back drop! Therefore, it is imperative that we continue to embrace this opportunity even if that means a short-term investment to make sure that Wirral is ready to grab hold of every opportunity presented. Losing our nerve at this late hour and failing to continue with investment is surely not an option.

***Councillor Andrew Hodson***



I am delighted to have been associated with the Panel in working towards building a social and economic foundation and ensuring a Wirral welcome for those who will be involved and working within the Trade Centre.

This is an exciting time for Wirral and I know that Wirral Council is committed to working in partnership with Peel Holdings to ensure that Wirral Waters will be a resounding success.

***Councillor Jean Stapleton***



It is remarkable that Peel Holdings in partnership with Wirral Borough Council have continued to drive the development of the International Trade Centre despite the recession. It has the potential to stimulate the local economy, assist businesses to grow and to provide new job opportunities for Wirral residents.

All parties in Wirral have put their political differences aside to ensure the smooth passage of this project through all the planning and development processes. This in itself shows the level of importance given and the determination of everyone in the Council to ensure the project's delivery.

The recommendations made in this Report are made against a backdrop of unprecedented financial challenges facing the Council. It is my hope that Officers will be able to use sources of funding outside the core budget in order to finance the recommendations made wherever possible.



### **3. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF**

At the meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2012, members agreed to undertake an in-depth Scrutiny Review to produce an informed response to the Notice of Motion that was approved by Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The Notice of Motion, which was agreed unanimously, stated:

*That:*

*1) Council recognises that all political parties have consistently worked in true political partnership to support the Wirral Waters project. This unified approach has assisted Peel in the development of this project and helped to attract significant and further potential Chinese and other investors.*

*(2) Council also recognises the outstanding input from key Officers to ensure that Wirral is presenting itself as a highly attractive investment partner and destination.*

*(3) Council is encouraged to see that Peel have secured and match funded £1.3 million of Government funds to start preparing the ITC site, with land remediation works already underway, and that recent visits by delegations from China were highly successful in presenting the Trade Centre site as an attractive location for potential tenants, with a further delegation expected in April.*

*(4) Council now calls for work to "prepare the ground" for Wirral to be Trade Centre Ready, so that Wirral and its residents and businesses are in the best possible position to embrace all the potential business opportunities that will come and that we can offer the best possible support to businesses and investors that come here, to ensure the ITC is a long term success.*

*(5) Work needs to be undertaken to ensure Wirral is ready, particularly in the following areas:*

*(i). Trade, export, marketing and inward investment*

*(ii). Employment and skills*

*(iii). Education, including languages and training*

*(iv). Culture and development of longer term links with China, Korea, India and other countries likely to develop significant future business links with Wirral.*

*(6) Council therefore calls on the three Parties to agree membership for a 1:1:1 Member Working Party, reporting to the Economy and Regeneration OSC. This Working Party will scope a project leading to recommendations to ensure this Council and its partners are Trade Centre Ready and able to embrace all opportunities for development through its growing links with China and other countries and that potential barriers to businesses and investors are identified and recommendations made as to how these can be overcome.*

*(7) Council requests that the Working Party completes this work in time to enable any recommendations to be implemented before the ITC is built and opens for business and so that recommendations have enough time to be considered for the setting of 2013/14 budget, as appropriate.*

*(8) Council also requests that the first meeting of the Working Party receive a report updating on progress in relation to paragraph 3 of the previous Notice of Motion on this topic (Minute 53, 17 October 2012 Council refers).*

Subsequent to the Committee meeting in June, the Panel Members proposed that the Review should consider a number of key areas. The Scope Document for the Scrutiny Review, attached as Appendix 1 to this Report, was agreed by the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2012. It was agreed that the Review would concentrate on the following issues:

- What is the provision of local services available to Wirral companies as they prepare to trade with new companies and emerging markets?
- How can inward investors be made to feel most welcome in Wirral?
- What are the business support needs of companies operating in the International Trade Centre?
- How is the International Trade Centre to be marketed and what role can the Council play?
- How can cultural links be developed?
- What are the issues regarding language and education barriers / opportunities?
- What needs to be done to ensure adequate cultural awareness and training among Council officers and members?

#### **4. METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW**

The Panel has employed a number of methods to gather evidence:

##### **4.1 Meetings with relevant organisations**

A series of visits has taken place at which the Panel Members could discuss relevant issues with representatives of organisations external to the Council, including some members of the voluntary and community sector. All of the visits were very constructive and highlighted issues relevant to the Review. Those visited during the course of the Review were:

###### Peel Holdings

- Lindsey Ashworth, Development Director

###### Calday Grange Grammar School

- Mark Rodaway, Headteacher
- Jacqui McIver, Confucius Classroom Coordinator
- Geoff Bosworth, Confucius Classroom Manager
- Lisa Wang, Head of Chinese Studies
- Janey Xie, Hanban Teacher
- Juan Qui , Hanban Teacher

###### Wirral Multicultural Organisation

- Raza Moula, Chief Executive
- Mindy Rutherford, Office Manager
- Kazi Ahmed, Chair
- Steve Tam, Treasurer
- Shyamal Mukherjee, Board Member
- Van Tran, Board Member
- Shanti Saagar, Board Member
- Councillor Brian Kenny, Board Member

###### Wirral Change

- Clint Agard, Chief Executive

##### **4.2 Meetings with Officers**

A series of individual meetings has taken place at which the Panel Members could discuss relevant issues with key officers from Wirral Borough Council. In addition, Kevin Adderley, Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning provided advice to the Panel Members during both the initial planning stage and the closing phase of the Review. Those interviewed during the course of the Review were:

###### Wirral Borough Council

- Emma Degg, Head of Communications and Community Engagement
- Jacqui Cross, Corporate Equality & Cohesion Manager
- Paula Basnett, Senior Investment Manager, Invest Wirral
- Maud Duthie, International Business Manager, Invest Wirral
- Alan Evans, Strategic Investment Manager
- Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager, Secondary Education
- Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, Primary Education
- Phil Sheridan, Headteacher consultant - Secondary
- Steve Dainty, Headteacher consultant - Primary
- Sarah Howarth, Manager, MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) / Lifelong Learning
- Avril McCarthy, EAL (English as an Additional Language) Consultant



## 5. EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 The concept of the International Trade Centre

The purpose of the ITC will be to facilitate the promotion and sales of goods to the wholesale market of the UK and the rest of Europe. The Trade Centre will enable up to 1,000 separate companies from China, India, South Korea or other emerging economies to exhibit, sell, assemble and distribute their goods into the UK, Irish and European market. Resembling a trading post, the ITC will enable international companies to build relationships with European wholesale buyers who will use the facility for their purchasing needs. UK and European buyers will be able to place orders directly with companies in the ITC and have goods delivered either to the ITC or to their final destination. It is anticipated that some companies will choose to operate warehousing and assembly facilities close to the Trade Centre. The ITC will be open to tradespeople; not the general public.

It is intended that the ITC will form an initial part of the Wirral Waters project which, in turn, forms part of the Ocean Gateway project which stretches from Manchester to Liverpool along the line of the Manchester Ship Canal. At the western end of the Ocean Gateway are the two proposed high rise property developments, Liverpool Waters and Wirral Waters which focus on developing the Liverpool waterfront and surrounding the River Mersey docklands. The ITC site is adjacent to the proposed Wirral Waters development.

The Peel Group has formed a partnership with a Chinese company, Sam Wa International, to deliver the ITC. Significant effort has been made to secure clients for the Trade Centre among Chinese companies, including those in Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Suzhou and Jiang Yin. Relationships are now being built with Indian businesses based in Mumbai and Delhi.

It is proposed that the ITC will be based on a series of four buildings with a total floor space of 230,000 square metres (2,500,000 square feet). It will be constructed on land at West Float, Birkenhead. The first of the four buildings, Phase 1, will be 600,000 square feet in size and is expected to provide a base for up to 300 new overseas businesses. Each of the four buildings will be split over two floors. Each building will comprise individual trade showroom units, serviced offices, conference suites, a management suite and an exhibition space, as well as cafés and restaurants.

The ITC will include a dedicated management team who will manage the on-going running and maintenance of the building as well as other aspects such as security and cleaning. The management team will also provide dedicated marketing expertise which will aim to raise awareness of the ITC in the UK and Europe. It is intended that tenants of the ITC will bring both a good track record in business plus high quality products. These criteria will result in obtaining good tenants with the right products. There will also be a good mix of products which will cover all sectors and business lines including but not restricted to electrical items, textiles & clothing, kitchenware, furniture, fixtures, fittings and building materials.

Construction of Phase 1 of the development has already started with ground remediation works. The indicative timetable for the remainder of the project is:

- 2012 Talking to prospective tenants and securing tenants
- Oct – Dec 2012 Reserved matters planning application
- Feb 2012 – Jan 2013 Decontamination of Phases 1 and 2 land
- Spring 2013 – Spring 2014 Construction
- Spring 2014 Open for business

## 5.2 Budget and organisational Issues

Panel Members are aware of the extreme financial conditions which currently face the Council and understand that budget savings must be made, leading to some difficult decisions. However, this does not mean that equal savings should be made across all departments and service areas. There is no doubt that the International Trade Centre provides Wirral with an enormous opportunity. As well as welcoming many overseas companies to the Borough, there is the possibility of over 2000 jobs being created for UK-based employees. Furthermore, there is the prospect that the ITC could provide the impetus for further investment and job creation in the longer term through the Wirral Waters project. Wirral currently has the lowest job density ratio in the Liverpool City Region with 57 jobs per 100 residents. Job creation is also pivotal in the delivery of some other Council priorities such as the Child Poverty Strategy. It is, therefore, in the Council's interests that the ITC becomes a huge success. The Council's Corporate Plan for 2012/13 has already established the following as priority areas for 'The Economy' in Wirral:

"We will position Wirral as a leading vibrant global location for businesses and visitors. We will continue to support international trade links and develop our relationships with the private sector, to maximise inward investment and enable Wirral businesses to access new markets, sectors and opportunities, including those available locally".

"We will work hard to deliver all of the opportunities presented by the Wirral Waters Development".

Indeed, in his Foreword and Vision section of the Corporate Plan, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Phil Davies, identifies five of the Administration's immediate policy priorities. One of these is "Creating and safeguarding jobs and attracting new investment". The Panel Members have, therefore, concluded that the success of the ITC should be considered to be a high priority for the Authority and that this should be reflected in the Council's budgetary process.

### **Recommendation 1 – The International Trade Centre as a Council priority**

The International Trade Centre is recognised as a great opportunity for the Borough and consequently is a high priority for the Council. Despite the extreme financial conditions faced by the Authority, the preparations for the Trade Centre should be reflected as a high priority within the Council's budgetary process.

Throughout this Scrutiny Review, Panel Members have been repeatedly told by external partners of the value placed on relationships with the Council. Several key officers and political figures have been the driving force for the Council during the development of the ITC project. Changes in key personnel at this late stage of the project should be viewed as high risk.

### **Recommendation 2 – Relationships**

The Panel Members urge that strong consideration be given to ensure a consistent and relational-based approach is maintained with regard to the existing partners engaged in the ITC project.

This Report provides a view of the current position of the Council's part in the ITC project. However, the project is developing and requirements will change. It is, therefore, necessary that the Council is able to adapt to and support those changing requirements. Due to the high profile of the ITC project, the Panel Members propose that a member-led Working Group should be formed to support that process. The purpose of the Working Group is to initially monitor the progress of the recommendations from this Report but, in the longer term, to provide strategic leadership in the delivery of the ITC project from the Council's perspective.

**Recommendation 3 – Creation of a member-led Working Group to oversee the delivery of the Trade Centre project**

Due to the high profile of the International Trade Centre project, a member-led Working Group should be created to oversee the implementation of the recommendations from this Scrutiny Review and, in the longer term, the delivery of the ITC project from the Council's perspective.

The numbers of overseas employees and family members moving to Wirral is unknown at present. The working assumption is that there will be at least one overseas employee for each company operating from within the ITC. However, it will be necessary to know the numbers and types of businesses that are likely to be moving in order to commence detailed planning of requirements on a corporate level. Similarly, there is no information available yet regarding the type of individuals and families who will be arriving. As this is a completely new model for business in the UK, there is no previous experience on which to base any predictions. Such information is very important to enable planning, for example, of school places and of accommodation requirements. The availability of such information will have implications for the success of other recommendations detailed later in this Report, such as the availability of 'soft-landing' support for the newcomers to Wirral (see Recommendation 7). In return, as part of the planning process, there is also a need to provide information to the employees of overseas companies regarding key dates, for example, with the schools' admission process.

**Recommendation 4 - The gathering of corporate and individual requirements from prospective tenants**

As soon as tenants for the International Trade Centre have been recruited, Wirral Council and Peel Holdings should work together to determine the corporate and individual requirements of those who will be moving to Wirral. The resulting information will inform social needs, such as for housing and education, and will enable more detailed planning to take place.

As has been stated earlier, the emergence of the International Trade Centre will give the local economy a boost as well as raise the profile of Wirral on the global stage. The success of the ITC will be of national significance given the anticipated level of inward investment. One of the recent criticisms of the Council has been that we are not willing enough to celebrate success nor ambitious enough in our approach. The Council's Self Assessment for the Corporate Peer Challenge, to be held in October 2012, points out that "What is also clear is that the organisation is unnecessarily defensive and is short of confidence". In order to celebrate the anticipated opening of the Trade Centre, consideration should, therefore, be given to making this a real flagship event.

**Recommendation 5 – Official opening of the International Trade Centre**

The International Trade Centre will create the greatest concentration of foreign-owned businesses in the UK and will provide a major boost to the economy in Wirral and the Liverpool City Region. To mark an event of significance to the UK economy, consideration should be given to an invitation being made to a member of the Royal Family and / or a senior Government figure to open the Trade Centre.

**5.3 Opportunities for existing Wirral businesses**

The biggest advantage of the ITC for Wirral's businesses is that, as one witness told the Panel Members:

"Business people will be on your doorstep".

Indeed, Wirral businesses will be able to take space in the ITC if it is commercially effective for them to do so. As it is anticipated that there will be opportunity for Wirral companies to trade through the ITC, equally there will be some opportunities for service industries that will arise. Further work needs

to be done to identify those opportunities which may be suitable for Wirral businesses. Invest Wirral currently hosts networks for Wirral-based businesses, delivered via the BusinessWirral.com website. It is suggested that, once the new opportunities arising from the ITC are identified, these are discussed further within the Business Forums.

BusinessWirral.com may be the perfect portal to ask local businesses for expressions of interest in becoming a preferred partner for the ITC. It is understood that, due to competitiveness rules, the Council will have to supply a minimum of three names. Furthermore, if there are preferred partners in particular sectors, those businesses could be given the opportunity to undertake some cultural training to enable them to provide a better service to overseas visitors. Clearly, it would be important that quality control and vetting of suppliers is part of that process. As one witness told the Panel Members:

“An effective business relationship relies on respect and cultural awareness”.

As a result, it may be possible for workshops to be provided, aimed at business people, providing services such as car hire and hotels to help to overcome language and cultural barriers. There may be an opportunity for some of the local schools and community groups to become involved in providing such training.

#### **Recommendation 6 – Provision of information regarding opportunities for existing Wirral businesses**

The opportunities arising from the International Trade Centre for existing Wirral businesses can best be disseminated by use of the existing Wirral Business Forums, which are already coordinated by Invest Wirral on BusinessWirral.com. Consideration should be given to the creation of a preferred partners’ list for the International Trade Centre. Wirral businesses could be given the opportunity to apply for ‘preferred partner’ status for a range of services from taxis to hotels. In return, appropriate training in language, cultural and business etiquette could be offered to such businesses.

#### **5.4 Making Inward Investors welcome**

Although it is likely that employees of companies moving to Wirral will have an understanding of the English language, it is also important that adequate information is available for the new arrivals. A relatively recent arrival to the UK explained:

“It would be good to have all the relevant information on daily life in our own language, available in a welcome pack or handbook. Most business people might be interested in pages on the Wirral Council website such as education and housing. More detailed translation would be good”.

Another citizen from overseas agreed that:

“The availability of help with daily things is very important. Initially, it would be helpful to have more support available in the native language, for example, Mandarin, as it is very tiring to speak constantly in a foreign language”.

The support needs for companies and their employees are likely to differ depending on individual needs. However, evidence emerged during the review of backing for the establishment of ‘soft landing’ support. The concept is based upon the provision of a single point of contact to assist employees in making arrangements, for example with accommodation and school requirements. As the requirements of individuals and their families will vary, for example, the size and age of a family, it is, therefore, important that the support provided is not on a “one size fits all” basis. It is likely that much of the support will result in sign-posting to relevant organisations. At this stage, the precise requirements are uncertain. Once companies have become established as tenants of the ITC, these requirements will become clearer and will enable further detailed planning to take place. Nevertheless, advice and sign-posting will be required both during the period of planning to move and post-relocation on issues ranging from education to housing to health. It is suggested that many of those support services already exist, some provided by organisations such as Wirral Multicultural

Organisation and Wirral Change. Sign-posting to those existing services will be part of the solution. When describing existing services for the BME communities, one witness told the Panel Members: “There is no need to re-invent the wheel”.

There may also be opportunities to make use of existing translation services which are present within community groups and schools. Indeed, it is understood that funding has been made available to create a hub for a multi-racial translation service. It is planned that, in two years’ time, there will be a hub set up to provide translation into 15 languages. The hub will include agencies such as Wirral Change, WMO, Irish Community Care Merseyside (ICCM), Wired and Advocacy in Wirral. In addition, there are language skills available in a number of local schools including Calday Grange Grammar School.

Central to a successful ‘soft-landing’ will be effective communication. Therefore, prior to moving, it will be important that information is shared from the host company in, for example, China. Equally, the ‘soft-landing’ team will also need to have good links within the Council and across other agencies in order to provide a coordinated service. Cultural understanding of the potential tenants will also be important. In summary, one witness concluded:

“There is a need for a friendly base camp here, where good information is available at the time of the first phone call”.

During the review, the example of driving licences was cited as an example where good advice will be necessary to counter cultural barriers. If someone is moving from outside the EU, they will need to change their driving licence within a year. This may necessitate driving lessons. In turn, this may provide opportunities for local businesses, as discussed earlier in Section 5.3. Access to the National Health Service is another example where additional advice will be required.

#### **Recommendation 7 – ‘Soft-landing’ support**

Consideration should be given to establishing a Council-led ‘soft-landing’ support team which will be available to those companies and employees relocating from overseas to Wirral. In due course, further to the determination of exact requirements, a report should be produced for Cabinet to explain the purpose and proposed delivery of the support. The required support is likely to provide sign-posting for issues such as:

- Accommodation
- Education and schools
- Health issues
- Information on NHS provision and medical insurance
- Preferred partners for insurance
- Police registration (for visa requirements)
- Point of contact with the ‘International Welcomer’ volunteers
- Recruitment of staff for the new companies
- Driving instruction
- Cultural advice and support
- General queries and advice

The increased business rates which will be available to Wirral Council as a result of Enterprise Zone status could be used to facilitate the ‘soft-landing’ support team. Such a team would be time limited based around the need to manage the significant influx of new residents and ensure they have the best possible start to their new life on the Wirral. All of our investigation points to the importance of relational-based support within eastern cultures.

In addition to the ‘soft-landing’ support, it is proposed that a detailed information pack is produced. It is understood that Peel is assembling an information pack which includes information such as schools and GPs. It is clearly important that Wirral Council does not duplicate the work that is already being undertaken by Peel. It appears that much useful information is already available but needs to be coordinated in a centralised form. As an example, there is already a significant amount of material available on the MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) section of the Wirral Council website.



Although a limited amount of material may be required in hard copy, it is suggested that the main objective is to provide information on websites or available via download. During the Review, it was suggested that an App could be made available to describe the features of Wirral which would be most useful to those newcomers moving with the new companies. Although, an App called AroundMe is already available for iPhones, this provides information relevant to the user's location and allows the nearest facilities to be selected. Information is available on that App in different languages including Mandarin.

#### **Recommendation 8 – Information Pack**

An Information Pack will be produced. The Pack will provide practical information and will be available to newcomers and those planning to move to Wirral. The information should be available primarily via a website. Consideration should also be given to the development of a Wirral App from which relevant information could be downloaded. The Information Pack will be translated into major alternative languages, for example, Mandarin.

The point was made by several witnesses that the personal welcome from work colleagues and neighbours is very important. For newcomers to the UK, personal contact will be critical and it is, therefore, suggested that a team of volunteers could be assembled to show newcomers what it is like to be British by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. During this Scrutiny Review, discussion took place regarding the possibility of forming a group of UK-based volunteers, acting as cultural ambassadors, to showcase British food and culture. It is also important that the existing BME communities in Wirral, including the Chinese community, are given the opportunity to act as ambassadors and buddies to the new arrivals. It is possible that the organisation of that team could be led by an existing voluntary group(s). There appeared to be strong support, particularly among the voluntary and community sector, for the proposal to create an 'International Welcomer' team. In addition, it would be particularly advantageous for schools to become involved in the process. The recruitment of students / families of Wirral schools who teach languages such as Mandarin would be especially beneficial. This will enable those students to have the opportunity to improve their language skills at the same time as providing a valuable service.

#### **Recommendation 9 – The 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers**

An 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers should be created to provide new arrivals from overseas with British cultural experiences while showcasing Wirral. The volunteer team will enable new arrivals to be familiarised with British culture by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. The 'International Welcomer' team should include the recruitment of students / families of Wirral schools who teach languages such as Mandarin. This will enable those students to have the opportunity to improve their language skills at the same time as providing a valuable service.

It is understood that there is a probability that Birkenhead Town Hall will be set up as a headquarters for the marketing of the ITC project in Wirral. This will result in a lot of overseas visitors making use of this facility. This resource will give an opportunity to demonstrate Wirral's history, culture, schools, leisure facilities and so on to the many anticipated visitors. It is, therefore, important that the Council does all that is possible to ensure that a safe, clean and welcoming environment is maintained in Hamilton Square. This is one way in which the commitment of the Council to the ITC project can be clearly demonstrated.

#### **Recommendation 10 – Birkenhead Town Hall and environs**

As Birkenhead Town Hall is likely to be the base for Peel's marketing team in Wirral, it is important that steps are taken by Wirral Council to create a secure, safe and welcoming environment for the many overseas visitors who are likely to visit. This would be enhanced by the Council supporting the introduction of a 'Friends of Hamilton Square' Group.

## 5.5 ITC business support needs

Evidence gathered during the Review suggests that the majority of business needs of the ITC tenants will be met through Peel Holdings. A management team, provided by Peel, will be permanently situated within the ITC complex. This in-house Peel team will permanently manage the site and be available to talk to the tenants.

Invest Wirral already provide a highly regarded service to Wirral-based businesses. It is anticipated that any specific business support which is required from the Council will be provided through that channel. However, once further planning has taken place, a view will need to be taken on the capacity of the core team at Invest Wirral to take on any additional workload. In terms of the existing business network support provided by Invest Wirral, which is delivered via the BusinessWirral.com website, it is possible that the new companies will want to join networks in the most relevant business sector. The existing business forums include manufacturing; financial & professional business services; maritime & logistics, tourism & retail, construction, environmental and another for digital / creative. At this stage, it is not anticipated that a separate forum will be required specifically for those companies operating within the International Trade Centre.

It is recognised that overseas companies moving into the International Trade Centre will require assistance with the recruitment of additional UK-based employees. Again, once the specific requirements of prospective tenants are known, further work will be required to establish how best this support can be provided. However, an initial view is that this support could be made available through the 'soft-landing' support (see Recommendation 7) providing an advisory and coordination role with respect to recruitment.

Anecdotal evidence demonstrated that it is currently difficult for some business people to obtain a UK visa in China. Indeed, one of the witnesses had a four week delay before arriving in the UK due to visa complications. This issue has been recognised by Peel Holdings, who are putting arrangements in place to alleviate the problem with regard to the International Trade Centre. Panel Members have concluded that there are no further actions that can be taken by the Council at this stage to ease this problem. However, the process of registration at a police station, which is specified on some visas, can be a difficult process for some new arrivals. It is suggested that advice on this process is made available through the 'soft-landing' support (see Recommendation 7) and the Information Pack (see Recommendation 8) described elsewhere in the Report.

## 5.6 Marketing

In relation to the International Trade Centre, a web-based pack is already available providing information such as accommodation and transport. The information is also available in Mandarin. The equivalent information is available within Peel's brochure for the ITC. Wirral Council is responsible for providing the content relating to the Borough for both print and web-based marketing material. The intention is to market the whole of Wirral; not just the ITC. However, Wirral Council is not directly responsible for the marketing in China. Peel Holdings and Sam Wa International are responsible for the marketing exercise that is currently underway in China and elsewhere. Information is available on three different websites:

InvestWirral.com (Invest Wirral's inward investment site)

<http://www.investwirral.com/>

Peelez.co.uk (Peel's Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone site)

<http://www.peelez.co.uk/>

Peelitic.co.uk (Peel's ITC site)

<http://www.peelitic.co.uk/>

Sections of the peelitic.co.uk website are apparently available in Mandarin.

As stated earlier, it is intended that Birkenhead Town Hall is to be set up as a headquarters for the marketing of the project in Wirral. This will give an opportunity to demonstrate Wirral's history, culture and other facilities to the many overseas visitors who are expected to visit.

During the evidence-gathering stage of this Scrutiny Review, there was apparent excitement and enthusiasm for the ITC project. However, some concerns have been expressed regarding the potential impact that a sudden influx of migrants may have on the Borough. The Panel Members conclude that the International Trade Centre is a good news story. Nevertheless, it is important that the process is well planned and that the residents of Wirral are made fully aware of the benefits of the project to Wirral. It may be necessary to respond to accusations that "the Chinese are taking our jobs" with the true picture that the Chinese investment is creating new jobs. As the project develops, this can be achieved through greater presence of the ITC on the Council's website and in the local press.

**Recommendation 11 – Awareness-raising of the benefits to Wirral of the International Trade Centre**

The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to work closely with Peel Holdings in order to stress the positive aspects of the International Trade Centre for Wirral's residents.

**5.7 Development of cultural links**

The International Business Festival, which is being led by Liverpool, but of which Wirral is a partner will provide an opportunity to create a vision on both sides of the river. The festival, which is due to be held for a month in July 2014, will hopefully coincide approximately with the opening of the ITC. Although the Business Festival is not a cultural event in itself, it will, however, provide the opportunity for cultural events to run alongside and to promote cultural issues. This will be a great opportunity to showcase those communities to the rest of Wirral. As an example, it may be possible for dragon boat racing to be included as part of these events. Panel Members were informed that many schools in Wirral already celebrate such international festivals as Chinese New Year and Divali. There would appear to be a further opportunity to get schools and young people involved in the planning and execution of any events relating to the International Business Festival and the opening of the ITC. The evidence suggests that there would also be great enthusiasm from organisations such as Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation to become involved in such events. Indeed, it would be a great opportunity to link with existing businesses owned by BME communities and other local communities.

**Recommendation 12 – Events to celebrate cultural diversity**

In order to celebrate Wirral's cultural diversity, both large and small-scale cultural events should be held in Wirral to coincide with the International Business Festival and to celebrate the opening of the International Trade Centre. The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to ensure that Wirral's BME communities, Neighbourhood Forums and young people, particularly through schools, play a central role in the planning of these events. The successful model of the community-based Big Lunches could be used to encourage cultural street parties throughout the Borough.

The meetings held during this Review revealed very low knowledge amongst those participants regarding the twinning arrangements that are in place with Wirral Council. However, it is perhaps the schools that take the lead with their own twinning arrangements, some of which twin with towns and cities in emerging market countries, such as China and India. Indeed, as part of a Connecting Classroom project, which is supported by the British Council, a group of Chinese headteachers are due to visit some Wirral schools later in the year. This is part of a reciprocal arrangement which included a visit by a group of teachers from Wirral to China. It is noted that the Connecting



Classrooms project is linked to a different region of China and not to Suzhou and Taicang, with whom Wirral Council signed an agreement as part of the preparations for the ITC.

There are organisations in Wirral that aim to respond to the needs of the black and minority ethnic communities. Among these groups are Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation, who both provide a rich resource for the Borough. It is very much anticipated that these organisations will be well placed to provide some of the resource and support that will be required when the overseas employees arrive at the ITC. As the detailed planning for the ‘soft-landing’ takes place, as described in Section 5.4 above, it may well be that such community groups will be best placed to provide the required services. The Council will need to be clear on those requirements. While the work of Wirral Change focuses particularly on employment, work and training, it appears that there is some overlap in service provision, for example, with advice on health issues. During a meeting with Wirral Multicultural Organisation, one member described the organisation:

“WMO is a one stop shop for the BME community”.

Meanwhile another added that:

“The WMO acts as a bridge to different communities”

From the Council’s perspective, although there are a number of contracts in place with both organisations, the precise detail of all of those contracts was not clear to the Panel Members. The relationship between the Council and these organisations also did not appear to be on an outcome-led basis. It is, therefore, suggested that a review should take place to identify a clear understanding of the current contractual arrangements, explore the future requirements and create an environment where greater emphasis is placed on measurable outcomes of the services provided.

#### **Recommendation 13 – Review of services provided by Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change**

The contribution of both Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change to residents in Wirral is recognised and welcomed. However, further clarity regarding the expectations of both the Council and these partners relating to service provision and funding would be beneficial. Therefore, a full service review, including current contractual arrangements, should be undertaken. The review should lead to a greater emphasis on measurable outcomes for the services provided.

It is clear that there are many volunteering opportunities available in Wirral, often providing services to the BME communities. As has been stated previously, the family circumstances of those employees moving from overseas are currently uncertain. However, anecdotal evidence was found that as visa requirements may prevent family members from working, those additional family members may be a rich volunteering resource for community groups at the same time as preventing them from becoming isolated.

#### **Recommendation 14 – Volunteering opportunities**

Consideration should be given to ways of involving the family members of those newly-arrived overseas employees in the life of Wirral. This will involve the encouragement of volunteering among those family members in projects such as the MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) Volunteering Scheme and opportunities with Wirral Multicultural Organisation, Wirral Change and the wider voluntary sector.

### **5.8 Language and education**

There are different levels in order to be ‘language-ready’, ranging from an ability to do business through to total immersion in a language. As the lead investors are Chinese, it is fair to assume that, although not exclusively so, the initial wave of tenants in the ITC will include a proportion of Chinese

companies. Although employees arriving from China are likely to be English speakers, this may not necessarily be the case with family members. In addition, the ITC may provide job opportunities for Wirral people. The ability to communicate in Mandarin may well be a useful skill for future job seekers.

Teaching of Mandarin is already available across a number of educational establishments in Wirral. The language is already taught at Calday Grange Grammar School and Upton Hall School. The experience of Calday Grange Grammar School is of particular interest. Six foreign languages are currently included on the curriculum at Calday Grammar, including Mandarin, Russian and Spanish. An increasing proportion of students at the school are studying Chinese and Russian. This enables the students to develop an understanding of the economic shift that is taking place in the world. Since 2007, the school has been an accredited Advanced Confucius Classroom. Working in partnership with Hanban<sup>1</sup>, the Confucius Classroom status supports the teaching of Mandarin in a growing number of schools and to a growing number of young people. Hanban funding provides placements to support these school activities and also provides opportunities for schools to enter language-based competitions. As part of this initiative, Calday aims to support other schools, organisations and community groups in language teaching and learning and the study of China. As a "Hub School", Calday supports five "Spoke Schools" across the North West of England. There are approximately 2500 schools hosting a Confucius Centre globally.

The Confucius Classroom status enables Calday Grammar to welcome visiting Hanban teachers each year. They work at Calday as well as visiting other schools and organisations in the wider community, supporting the teaching of Chinese language and culture. From the Year 11 cohort of 180, 40 pupils have studied Mandarin to GCSE Level in 2011/12. Students also have an opportunity to study Mandarin to 'A' Level standard at Calday Grange. The Hanban team also provides the resource to teach Mandarin in primary schools, aimed at children in Year 2 upwards. Chinese language, culture, arts and crafts are already taught in 25 primary schools in Wirral via this outreach arrangement. Although this excellent work is taking place, it appears that there is not a coordinated Borough-wide long-term plan to teach language and culture in primary schools. In addition to the teaching in schools, there are facilities available in Wirral for the teaching of Mandarin to adults, including Wirral Grammar School for Girls at Bebington and Wirral Multicultural Organisation. The Panel Members hope that the ITC project will enable the further use of the facilities and talent that already exists in Wirral.

In the future, it is possible that the increasing use of the English Baccalaureate will lead to more teaching of languages as the Baccalaureate requires an A\*-C in a foreign language. However, in the past, changing the curriculum has not happened quickly. It is, therefore, unlikely that additional languages will be taught across most schools in the short-term. In addition, evidence emerged that not many teachers are being trained in alternative languages. There is, therefore, a shortage of emerging-market language teachers and also a perceived shortage of teaching resources for these languages, for example, books.

There is a common school admission policy for all children, regardless of whether they are moving from abroad. The current process is lengthy, for example, the closing date for secondary school admissions in September 2013 is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012. Long-term planning is a necessity. It will, therefore, be necessary to address issues relating to the timing and the length of the schools' admission process when employees and their families may arrive at relatively short notice.

It is likely that schools are not yet widely aware of the International Trade Centre and the implications for education. As an example, the business needs of companies operating in the ITC will create new jobs, which may require some new skills including language skills. Information is provided to potential sixth form students regarding priorities and opportunities at post-16. It is possible that information regarding the ITC could be included in that process. In the future, it is possible that the ITC could make those schools which include Mandarin on their curriculum appear more attractive to some

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<sup>1</sup> Hanban is an abbreviation for Chinese National Office for teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Hanban supports the Confucius Institute program, of which Calday Grange Grammar School is a part.

students and their parents. It is, therefore, suggested that an awareness process takes place with the schools in the Borough.

**Recommendation 15 – The awareness of the International Trade Centre within schools**

The Director of Children and Young People’s Department is requested to raise awareness of the International Trade Centre with headteachers and school governors regarding:

- The possibility of a number of new students arriving throughout the academic year;
- New job opportunities which may arise in Wirral, particularly for those with the right skills, including relevant language knowledge. Consideration should be given to ensuring that required skills for jobs in the ITC influence the development of the curriculum;
- Opportunities for schools to get involved in the cultural events being planned to coincide with the International Business Festival and the opening of the International Trade Centre. (see Recommendation 12)

If family members arrive in Wirral with little English-language knowledge, it should be the case that existing services will be in place to support those families and children. The MEAS service (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) is a well-established service in Wirral, being part of the Council’s Children and Young People’s Department. Some of the major services provided by MEAS include:

- Assessment of newly arrived pupils. The level of English is assessed and schools given advice.
- Helping schools to build capacity to cope with EAL students themselves (English as an Additional Language).
- Identify and fund hub schools where there is good practice. These hub schools act as mentors to other schools in helping to develop and roll-out effective policies.
- Identify training needs for all schools and run a training programme.

The number of EAL (English as an Additional Language) children in Wirral is shown below providing splits by district and between secondary, primary and special schools:

**Table 1 : The number of EAL (English as an Additional language) children in Wirral (as at January 2012)**

<i>EAL Numbers</i>		
<i>Wirral Jan 2012 census</i>		
Birkenhead	primary	360
	secondary	76
	special	
	<b>total</b>	<b>456</b>
Wallasey	primary	190
	secondary	105
	special	4
	<b>total</b>	<b>299</b>
West Wirral	primary	124
	secondary	127
	special	5
	<b>total</b>	<b>256</b>
South Wirral	primary	93
	secondary	145
	special	2
	<b>total</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>all areas</b>	<b>total</b>	<b>1251</b>

Source: MEAS Team, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

MEAS tries to promote cultural understanding across schools, with work taking place on multicultural activities in schools. The MEAS team currently includes two Bangladeshi members of staff. There are also Cantonese and Polish members of staff who are employed for one day per week. In addition, working in partnership with Wirral Multicultural Organisation (WMO), bilingual volunteers are recruited and trained to work with schools. There are currently approximately 20 volunteers working in schools. One volunteer at Rock Ferry Primary School has taught Mandarin to Year 1 and Year 2 children. There could be a potential for attracting new volunteers as a result of the arrival of newcomers arriving associated with the Trade Centre.

The MEAS team was formerly funded by Direct Government Grant to the Council. However, the grant is now allocated directly to schools who have, in the past, agreed to “keep it as a central pot” with which to fund the MEAS team. A review has recently taken place regarding the future requirements of schools. The primary schools have so far agreed to continue to fund a central MEAS team within the Council. The requirements of secondary schools are, at present, not clear. Final decisions will be made in January 2013.

In the future, the increasing presence of academies means that there is less certainty over the funding of Council services such as those provided by the MEAS team. It will be imperative that the MEAS team is able to demonstrate its worth to the schools across the Borough to guarantee continued support from as many schools as possible in order to maintain the funding.

**Recommendation 16 – Awareness of the Council’s Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS)**

The Director of Children and Young People’s Department is requested to ensure that all schools are made fully aware of the potential increase in the number of children from overseas arriving in Wirral and the potential impact on the Council’s Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS). The Schools Forum may be a helpful mechanism.

**5.9 Council Officers’ / Members’ cultural awareness and training**

Some aspects of Chinese culture became apparent during this Review. The Panel Members were informed by a witness of Chinese origin that:

“Chinese culture is very much status-orientated and hierarchical. Therefore, Chinese business people will feel that it is important to meet the most senior people. Chinese business people will appreciate friendly, hospitable guests. Business relationships are more likely to be successful if you are liked and respected. There is a process of relationship building and a need to get to know each other.”

Indeed, it was noted following the visit to Calday Grange Grammar School that, for the newly arrived Hanban teachers, an introduction to the school Headteacher is a sign of respect to the visitor and greatly appreciated. It is therefore, important that note is taken of this and many other cultural differences. As an example, cultural differences may give rise to differing views on timescales and ways of working. Council officers should do what they can to understand and respond positively to such challenges. It is important that potential inward investors are shown priority and, therefore, unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided wherever possible.

During this Review, it has been made clear that those UK citizens associated with the ITC project who have visited China have been made to feel extremely welcome. It is important that visiting delegations from China and other countries are made to feel equally welcome. This is of particular relevance to the Council when delegations are visiting municipal buildings, such as Wallasey Town Hall. Relatively small measures, such as a welcome in the language of the visitors can make a difference. There may also be an opportunity to involve schools in providing cultural displays during some of these visits.

**Recommendation 17 – A warm welcome in Wirral**

Delegations from overseas must be made to feel welcome in Wirral and especially at Council buildings including Wallasey Town Hall. An appropriate visible welcome should be provided including cultural displays which may present the opportunity for school involvement.

During this Scrutiny Review, the Panel Members had the opportunity to meet with Lindsey Ashworth and Kevin Adderley in an informal environment. During that meeting, the background to the ITC project and the vision for the future were explained. Panel Members found the meeting with Lindsey Ashworth both interesting and inspiring. It would be helpful if more members of the Council were able to have a similar opportunity.

**Recommendation 18 – Members’ meetings with Lindsey Ashworth**

Opportunities should be explored to give all Council members the opportunity to meet and discuss relevant issues with the Development Director of Peel Holding, Lindsey Ashworth.

In order to further raise the profile of the International Trade Centre among members and within the Council as a whole, it is suggested that an ITC Champion should be appointed. The success of the ITC project could lead to enormous benefits for the Borough. The appointment of an ITC Champion would give added impetus within the Council to help plan for the project and to ensure its eventual success.

**Recommendation 19 – Appointment of an ITC Champion**

Wirral Council should appoint an ITC Champion to help increase the profile of the International Trade Centre within the Council and to help plan for the Council’s involvement in the successful delivery of the project.

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***This Report was produced by the Trade Centre Scrutiny Panel (which reports to The Economy & Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee)***

**Appendix 1: Scope Document for the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review**

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Review Title: Trade Centre Scrutiny Review

<b>Scrutiny Panel Chair:</b> Cllr Mark Johnston	Contact details:
<b>Additional Panel members:</b> Cllr Andrew Hodson Cllr Jean Stapleton	Contact details:
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<b>Other Key Officer contacts:</b>	
<b>1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b> 1.1 Market Wirral as a world class location for businesses and visitors. 1.2 Make Wirral Council one of the most business friendly and supportive Councils in the country. 1.3 Rebalance Wirral's economy and improve access to employment and skills opportunities and tackle barriers to work. 1.4 Develop wider public sector partnerships for the improvement of services to Wirral residents.	

## 2. What are the main issues?

The aim of the Scrutiny Review is to ensure that Wirral is as ready as possible to fully embrace the business opportunities that will be available as a result of the development of the International Trade Centre. Issues within the scope of the review relate to:

- 2.1 Wirral Businesses - What is the provision of local services available to Wirral firms as they prepare to trade with new companies and emerging markets?
  - a. Import and export advice.
  - b. VAT, excise duties and taxation issues.
  - c. Contractual & legal advice.
  - d. Shipping.
  - e. Trading Standards / Safety Standards and Licensing issues.
  - f. Language support.
  - g. Business and cultural awareness.
- 2.2 Making Inward Investors welcome.
  - a. Visa requirements
  - b. Support services ready to meet cultural and language requirements, i.e. Hotels, car hire.
  - c. Translation services.
  - d. Legal support.
  - e. Banking and money transfer services.
  - f. Accommodation
  - g. General advice – business, transport, schooling.
- 2.3 ITC business support needs
  - a. What skills / support structures required by emerging market companies?
  - b. What are the gaps?
  - c. How can the Council and partners meet needs?
- 2.4 Marketing - How is the ITC to be marketed and what role can the Council play?
- 2.5 Development of cultural links.
  - a. What resources exist because of Wirral's ethnic community and how can they be encouraged to engage?
  - b. How can the Twin City relationships be promoted and celebrated?
  - c. How can the wider Wirral community be encouraged to understand and embrace the emerging market cultures?
- 2.6 Language & Education
  - a. Translation Services.
  - b. English lessons.
  - c. Cultural and language training for key service industries.
  - d. School promotion of languages and cultures.
- 2.7 Council Officers / Members cultural awareness and training.



**3. The Committee’s overall aim/objective in doing this work is:**

Council agreed a motion on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012 which included:

“Council calls on the three Parties to agree membership for a 1:1:1 Member Working Party, reporting to the Economy and Regeneration OSC. This working Party will scope a project leading to recommendations to ensure this Council and its partners are Trade Centre ready and able to embrace all opportunities for development through its growing links with China and other countries and that potential barriers to businesses and investors are identified and recommendations made as to how these can be overcome”.

**4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:**

4.1 To help the communities of Wirral to engage effectively with the opportunities provided by the Trade Centre development

**5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?**

Further scrutiny will aim to establish how Wirral Council can play its part in ensuring that any remaining potential barriers to businesses, within the remit of the Council, are identified and corrected in advance of the Trade Centre being developed.

**6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?**

6.1 Appropriate Cabinet members and Directors, Wirral Borough Council.

6.2 Partners of the Council who have an interest in the successful delivery of the Trade Centre.

**7. Duration of enquiry?**

Council agreed a motion on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012 which included:

Council requests that the Working party completes this work in time to enable any recommendations to be implemented before the ITC is built and opens for business and so that recommendations have enough time to be considered for the setting of the 2013/14 budget, as appropriate”.

Therefore, the Report is due before the end of 2012. (The Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to meet on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013).

**8. What category does the review fall into?**

Policy Review	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy Development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
External Partnership		<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Management		<input type="checkbox"/>
Holding Executive to Account		<input type="checkbox"/>			

**9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?**

The review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers. However, the panel are looking for advice from people with expertise on this topic.



<b>10. What information do we need?</b>	
<p><b>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</b></p> <p>Recent Committee / Cabinet reports</p> <p>Relevant national documents</p> <p>Any relevant briefing papers</p> <p>Reports from other Councils regarding inward investment</p> <p>Examples of good practice from other Councils</p>	<p><b>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</b></p> <p>Interviews with key officers</p> <p>Interviews with representatives of the business community</p> <p>Interviews with representatives of the voluntary and community sector</p>
<p><b>10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc).</b></p> <p>Several meetings will be held including:</p> <p>Kevin Adderley, Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning, Wirral Borough Council</p> <p>Lindsey Ashworth, Development Director, Peel</p> <p>Representatives of the business community</p> <p>Invest Wirral, Wirral Borough Council</p> <p>Emma Degg, Head of Communications and Community Engagement, Wirral Borough Council – to discuss marketing issues</p> <p>David Armstrong, Acting Director of Children’s Services, Wirral Borough Council – to discuss language and cultural issues in schools</p> <p>Confucius Centre, Calday Grange Grammar School (and other schools)</p> <p>Wirral Multicultural Organisation</p> <p>Billy Hui, Wirral Chinese Association and other representatives of voluntary and community sector</p> <p>Plus others.....</p>	<p><b>10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</b></p> <p>The issues identified in section 2 of this scope document.</p>

**11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits/observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).**

11.1 Meetings with officers, representatives of the business community and of the voluntary and community sector

11.2 Desk-top analysis

**12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).**

12.1 Discussions will be held with relevant voluntary and community organisations.

## WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 NOVEMBER 2012

#### REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIR, CLLR MARK JOHNSTON

#### BENEFIT REFORMS AND UNDER-OCCUPATION SCRUTINY REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on progress with the Benefit Reforms and Under-occupation Scrutiny Review.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 At previous meetings of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, members have reported considerable public concern regarding the impact of changes to housing benefit and welfare reforms specifically relating to under- occupation in both the public and private housing sectors.
- 1.2 At the meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012, members agreed to:  
“Further scrutiny work being undertaken on the impact of Welfare Reform on both private and social housing sectors and in particular, on under-occupancy in the social sector”.
- 1.2 All members of the Committee were invited to volunteer to join a Task & Finish Group to undertake detailed scrutiny work of this topic. Subsequently, a number of members attended a meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at which the detailed Scope for the review was discussed.
- 1.2 The members who have volunteered to be part of the Task & Finish Group are:
  - Councillor Mark Johnston (Chair)
  - Councillor Rob Gregson
  - Councillor Denise Realey
  - Councillor Jean Stapleton
  - Councillor Mike Sullivan
  - Councillor Janette Williamson

#### 2. Scope of the Review

- 2.1 A draft Scope Document, agreed by the Task & Finish Group members, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. Committee members are requested to consider this draft document for approval.

- 2.2 The Members are proposing that the focus of the scrutiny review is to investigate the impact of changes to housing benefit and the welfare reforms specifically relating to under occupation in both the public and private housing sectors. Key issues for the review will be:
- The impact of the introduction of the Housing Benefit Cap;
  - The impact of changes to the Local Housing Allowance, with special reference to the Shared Accommodation Rate for under-35's;
  - The allocation process for Discretionary Housing Benefit;
  - The impacts of the reforms relating to Under-occupation and how this affects households and communities;
  - The impact of the reforms on the Social Housing sector (Housing Associations).

### **3. Evidence Gathering**

- 3.1 In the past, similar scrutiny reviews have been undertaken by the members meeting individually with witnesses over a long period of time. The reviews have been found to be time-consuming for members and some have taken place over a long period of time. As an alternative, some Local Authorities employ a Select Committee-style of evidence gathering, whereby the majority of the oral evidence is gathered on one or two days. It is proposed that the Select Committee model of evidence-gathering is used for this scrutiny review.
- 3.2 As there are a relatively large number of witnesses proposed in the Scope document, it is suggested that two Evidence sessions may be more suitable than one. Further thought will be given to this during the planning stage for the review.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the Evidence Days will be organised in line with the following guidelines:
- The Evidence Days will be held in private session. It is suggested that holding the sessions in public may prevent some witnesses from discussing issues freely. The evidence-gathering for all previous scrutiny reviews has been held in private session and conducted in an informal manner.
  - A timetable for the Evidence Day(s) will be prepared.
  - Within the Evidence Day(s), witnesses will be asked to be available at a specific time during the day and only for a particular length of time. It will therefore be important that the timetable is adhered to.
  - Some witnesses may be grouped together and seen together if there is a logical link between them.
  - Prior to the Evidence Day, each witness will be sent a copy of the Scope document plus an indicative list of questions which they will be asked. It will, therefore, be necessary for members to give further thought to the broad subject areas that will be covered with each witness.
- 3.4 Following the Evidence Days, members of the Task & Finish Group will meet to review the evidence. At that point, it may be decided necessary to obtain further evidence prior to a draft report being prepared to reflect the views of the members. The report will be presented initially to the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and, if approved, to Cabinet.

#### **4. Timescales for the Review**

4.1 The indicative timetable for the review is as follows:

- The Scope document is due to be discussed / agreed at the meeting of the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2012.
- An Evidence Day(s) will be held during January 2013.
- Additional evidence-gathering will take place in late-January and early February 2013, if necessary.
- A report will be presented to the meeting of the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and subsequently to Cabinet.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the Committee approve the Scope for the Benefits Reform and Under-occupation Scrutiny Review, as detailed in Appendix 1, and note the progress to date.
- (2) Members comment on the proposed guidelines for the Evidence Day(s) and the indicative timescale for the review.
- (3) Officers undertake further planning of the review, in consultation with members of the Task & Finish Group.

**Cllr Mark Johnston**

**Chair of the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Appendix 1: Scope Document for the Benefit Reforms and Under-occupation Scrutiny Review**

Date: 26/10/12

Review Title: Relationship between Benefit Reforms and Under-occupation

<p><b>Scrutiny Panel Chair:</b> Cllr Mark Johnston</p>	<p>Contact details:</p>
<p><b>Panel members:</b> Cllr Rob Gregson Cllr Denise Realey Cllr Jean Stapleton Cllr Mike Sullivan Cllr Janette Williamson</p>	
<p><b>Scrutiny Officer:</b> Alan Veitch</p>	<p>Contact details: 0151 691 8564</p>
<p><b>Departmental Link Officer:</b> Lisa Newman</p>	<p>Contact details: 0151 691 8197</p>
<p><b>Other Key Officer contacts:</b></p>	
<p><b>1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b> The Council's Corporate Plan 2012/13 includes the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will respond effectively to the impact of welfare reform on the availability of and access to housing, including close partnership working with landlords in the borough. (A target in the Corporate Plan is to "Develop an action plan to respond to under-occupation in both the social and private rented sector by summer 2012").</li> <li>• We will support those who are experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness and we will continue to work hard to improve access to advice and information about the housing options that local people have.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, it should be noted that the reforms have the potential to impact on a range of Corporate objectives, for example, Child Poverty, the Fostering Service and so on.</p>	

## **2. What are the main issues?**

The key purpose of this scrutiny review is to investigate the impact of changes to housing benefit and the welfare reforms specifically relating to under occupation in both the public and private housing sectors.

Key issues for the review will be:

- Impact of the introduction of the Housing Benefit Cap
- Impact of changes to the Local Housing Allowance, with special reference to the Shared Accommodation Rate for under-35's
- Allocation process for Discretionary Housing Benefit
- Impacts of the reforms relating to Under-occupation and how this affects households and communities
- Impact of the reforms on the Social Housing sector (Housing Associations)

Specific attention will be given to the impact of the reforms on issues such as:

- People who are separated from their partner but share the care of children but are not the 'main carer' for the child or children. Those previously allocated an extra bedroom for this will be affected
- Foster parents
- Children with disabilities or those who need an extra bedroom for medical equipment
- Social Housing Provider's rental income and ability to invest in Wirral
- Impact on HMO's (Houses in Multiple Occupation)
- Impact on homeless services in Wirral

Note: The following reforms are outside the scope of this review:

- Universal Credit
- Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme



**3. The Committee's overall aim/objective in doing this work is:**  
 Members have reported considerable public concern regarding the impact of changes to housing benefit and welfare reforms specifically relating to under-occupation in both the public and private housing sectors.  
 This review will investigate the steps which the Council and other partners are already planning to take and consider further actions that may be feasible in order to mitigate against some impacts of the reforms.

- 4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:**
- 4.1 To understand the potential impacts of the reforms
  - 4.2 Propose options to alleviate the negative impacts of the reforms
  - 4.3 To understand whether joint work can be done with key partners

**5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?**  
 Further scrutiny will give members the opportunity to assure themselves that the Council is taking all possible steps to lessen any negative impact of the reforms. Scrutiny will enable the experience of those directly impacted by the reforms to help identify any recommendations for changes. These recommendations will be referred to Cabinet.

- 6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?**
- 6.1 Appropriate Cabinet members and Directors, Wirral Borough Council.
  - 6.2 Partners of the Council, for example, Housing Associations, Private Landlords, Police.

- 7. Duration of enquiry?**
- The Scope document is due to be discussed / agreed at the meeting of the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2012.
  - A Select Committee session(s) will be held during January 2013.
  - Additional evidence-gathering will take place in late-January and early February 2013, if necessary.
  - A report will be presented to the meeting of the Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

**8. What category does the review fall into?**

Policy Review	X <input type="checkbox"/>	Policy Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
External Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holding Executive to Account	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?**  
 The review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers. However, the panel are looking for advice from people with expertise on this topic, such as Shelter.

<b>10. What information do we need?</b>	
<p><b>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant Government Departmental reports</li> <li>• Relevant national documents</li> <li>• Previous Cabinet / Scrutiny Committee reports</li> <li>• Briefing paper prepared by Lisa Newman (for meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012)</li> <li>• Centre for Public Scrutiny – Policy briefing on Welfare Reform, September 2012</li> <li>• Report based on research undertaken by Cambridge University</li> <li>• Reports from other Councils into similar topics, for example, Bristol Council</li> </ul>	<p><b>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</b></p> <p>Interviews with key officers</p> <p>Interviews with affected tenants / residents</p> <p>Examples of good practice from other Councils</p> <p>Statistics for Wirral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people currently get more than £26,000 in benefits (and will therefore be affected by the benefit cap)?</li> <li>• How many people aged under 35 are affected by the Shared Accommodation Rate?</li> <li>• What is the current and future budget Discretionary Housing Benefit?</li> </ul>

**10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc).**

**The following will be invited to the Select Committee session:**

- Brian Simpson, Wirral Partnership Homes
- Alan Hughes, Wirral Methodist Housing Association
- Steve Newsham, Regenda Housing Association
- Nigel Hughes, YMCA
- Representatives of the Private Landlords Forum (x2)
- Malcolm Flanagan, Housing Benefits, Wirral Borough Council
- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
- Welfare Rights, Wirral Borough Council
- Shelter
- Sheila Khan, Fostering Service, Wirral Borough Council
- A foster carer
- Tenants representative (aged under 35)
- Tenants from the social housing sector (x2)
- Inspector Paul Vickers(or Inspector Chris Lucan-Pratt), Merseyside Police
- Homelessness Team, Wirral Borough Council
- HMO Team, (Homes of Multiple Occupation), Wirral Borough Council

**10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?**

Social Housing Providers / Landlords

- What is the impact of Under-occupation on your business plans?

Housing Benefits

- What are the criteria for allocating Discretionary Housing Benefit and how can this be used to help in alleviating the impacts of the reforms?
- What is being done to raise awareness among those people affected?
- Are you able to identify those clients who are affected?

Welfare Rights / CAB / Shelter

- What is the evidence of increasing hardship?

Fostering

- How will the reforms affect the fostering service?
- How will the reforms affect the Council's ability to care for vulnerable children?

Tenants / Residents

- What is the impact of the reforms?
- How likely are you to move and what are your prospects?

Police

- Do you have concerns regarding the benefit reforms?
- How will your service be affected?

Homeless Team

- How has the reform affected the numbers who are presenting as homeless and how is that likely to change?
- What is your ability to respond?
- If a client is evicted, what is the cost of temporary accommodation?

**11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits / observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).**

- 11.1 A Select Committee session(s) will be organised at Wallasey Town Hall. All listed witnesses (as in Section 10.3 above) will be invited to attend at a specified time throughout the day(s).
- 11.2 Desktop analysis / research

**12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).**

It is estimated that 3100 households in the social housing sector alone will be affected by these reforms. Therefore, a general call for evidence is likely to lead to a large number of responses. As a result, a more targeted approach is proposed.

- 12.1 A small number of tenants will give evidence during the Select Committee session.
- 12.2 A targeted questionnaire may be possible
- 12.3 Advocacy agencies such as Welfare Rights and CAB are invited to represent the views of their clients.

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## UPDATE ON WORK PROGRAMME : ECONOMY & REGENERATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2012

### Reports to assist in monitoring the Committee's work programme

It was agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs Group in September 2008 to use the following reports to monitor the work programme for each Scrutiny Committee. The last item on each Scrutiny Committee agenda should be 'Review of the Committee Work Programme'.

#### Report 1 - Monitoring Report for Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

This report will list all items that have been selected by the Committee for inclusion on the work programme for the current year.

It will also include items, such as previous Panel Reviews, where recommendations have been made to Cabinet. It is important that the implementation of these recommendations is monitored. Otherwise there is no measure of the success of scrutiny.

For each item on the work programme, the report will give a description, an indication of how the item will be dealt with, a relative timescale for the work and brief comments on progress.

#### Report 2 - Suggestions for Additions to Work Programme

The Work Programme for the Committee should be reviewed at each meeting. This will enable members to ask for new Items to be added to the programme. This report will list any newly suggested items. Committee will then have the opportunity to agree (or not) for them to be added to the programme.

#### Report 3 - Proposed Outline Meeting Schedule for the Municipal Year

The report will, for each scheduled Committee meeting, list those items which are likely to be on the meeting agenda. This will give the opportunity for Committee members to take a greater lead in organising their work programme.

#### Report 4 - Progress Report on In-Depth Panel Reviews

This report will give a very brief update on progress / timescales for in-depth panel reviews which are in the 'ownership' of the Committee.

**REPORT 1**  
**MONITORING REPORT FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**  
**ECONOMY & REGENERATION : 14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2012**

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
06/06/11	Green Growth – Motion agreed at Council in April requesting this Scrutiny Committee to “investigate and draw up a report for Cabinet on the best ways to create and support a ‘cluster’ of companies to lead the way in driving a Green economy on Wirral and across the country”.	In-depth Scrutiny Review by Working Group of Members	December 2011	<p>This item was proposed by members for inclusion on the work programme at the committee meeting on 06/06/11.</p> <p>Scope document for the Review agreed by Committee on 05/09/11. The final report for the review was presented to Committee on 08/03/12 and was referred to the Cabinet meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Cabinet also received a departmental report providing a response to the recommendations of the scrutiny review.</p> <p>An officer / member working group, the Green Economy Working Group, has been set up to lead the implementation of the recommendations.</p> <p>An update report regarding progress of the Working Group and the impact of the review’s recommendations will be provided to Committee in March 2013.</p>	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
06/06/11	The implementation of affordable housing policies	Report to Committee		During the discussion on the 'End of Year Performance Report' on 06/06/11, members requested a report on this item. Report on Affordable Housing presented to Committee on 05/09/11. A further report on Mortgages / Affordability was provided on 08/03/12. Cabinet (12/04/12) was requested to consider the creation of a LA Mortgage Scheme. The outcome of the Cabinet debate was reported back to Committee on 07/06/12. It was agreed that the item should be retained on the Committee's work programme.	
06/06/11	Business Start Programme The Programme has performed well but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we supporting businesses for the future?</li> <li>• What size of business is supported?</li> <li>• How long have supported businesses remained in business?</li> </ul> Were businesses satisfied with the support?	Report to Committee		This item was proposed by members for inclusion on the work programme at the committee meeting on 06/06/11. Report presented to Committee on 07/11/11. Agreed that a further report on the future options for a business start-up programme be brought to a future meeting. Progress report presented to Committee on 08/03/12. The views of Committee were referred to Cabinet on 12/04/12. The outcome of the Cabinet debate was reported back to Committee on 07/06/12.	



Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
06/06/11	Inward Investment	Report to Committee		<p>This item was proposed by members for inclusion on the work programme at the committee meeting on 06/06/11. Report presented to Committee on 05/09/11. Agreed that a further report will be provided once the Inward Investment Manager is in post.</p> <p>An update report was provided to Committee on 05/09/12.</p>	
05/09/11	Fair Trade	Mark Johnston		<p>The Chair provided a verbal report to Committee on 05/09/11 regarding the work undertaken by him as Fair Trade Champion. In future, this work will be organised by the Economy &amp; Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (rather than by Champions). A further report will be provided to a Committee meeting in the future (possibly November 2012).</p>	
07/11/11	Child Poverty Strategy	Officer Reports (Jane Morgan)		<p>A progress report on the Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan was presented to the Committee on 07/11/11. Agreed that regular updates will be brought to Committee in the future. Progress report provided to Committee on 08/03/12. Further Progress reports will be provided to Committee.</p>	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
07/06/12	Visit to regeneration and housing sites, for example, housing schemes, Wirral International Business Park, Wirral Waters	Members visit to be arranged by Kevin Adderley / David Ball		Tour of sites took place on 03/07/12.	
07/06/12	Housing Welfare Reform - The impact of Welfare Reform on both private and social housing sectors, and particularly on under occupation in the social sector.	To be agreed		This topic was suggested by the Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2012. On 05/09/12, Committee agreed "Further scrutiny work being undertaken on the impact of Welfare Reform on both private and social housing sectors and, in particular, on under-occupancy in the social sector". A special meeting of members is due to be held on 18/10/12 to discuss the scope for a planned scrutiny review. The draft Scope document will be presented to Committee on 14/11/12.	
07/06/12	Wirral Trade Centre – Referral from Council Council agreed a motion on 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 which included: "Council calls on the three Parties to agree membership for a 1:1:1 Member Working Party, reporting to the Economy and Regeneration OSC. This Working Party will scope a project leading to recommendations to ensure this Council and its partners are Trade Centre ready and able to embrace all opportunities for development through its growing links with China and other countries and that potential barriers to businesses and investors are identified and recommendations made as to how these can be overcome".	In-depth Scrutiny Review by Working Group of Members	End of 2012	This item was proposed by members for inclusion on the work programme at the Committee meeting on 07/06/12. The draft report from the Working Group will be discussed by the Committee on 14/11/12.	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
05/09/12	Budget Consultation – Scrutiny Workshop	Workshop		A Scrutiny Workshop regarding the budget and future priorities was held on 25/09/12. A further special meeting is scheduled for 06/11/12 to discuss the outcomes of the 'What Really Matters' Consultation process.	
05/09/12	The effect of the economy on youth unemployment	Report to Committee	Jan 2013	A report to Committee is due in January 2013.	
05/09/12	Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme	Report to Committee		A report to Committee is due in January 2013.	
05/09/12	Deep Clean scheme in town centres	Report to Committee		Further to a report to Committee regarding 'Town Centres Update' on 05/09/12, a future report on the Deep Clean scheme was requested.	
05/09/12	The operation of the Free after Three parking scheme	Report to Committee		Further to a report to Committee regarding 'Town Centres Update' on 05/09/12, a future report on the Free after Three parking scheme was requested.	
05/09/12	An evaluation of projects for Empty Shops funding	Report to Committee		Further to a report to Committee regarding 'Town Centres Update' on 05/09/12, a future evaluation report of projects for Empty Shops funding was requested. The report is to be delivered approximately 12 months after the funding was provided.	
05/09/12	Progress reports regarding the Shopping Centre Action Plans	Report to Committee		Further to a report to Committee regarding 'Town Centres Update' on 05/09/12, a future report on the Shopping Centre Action Plans was requested.	

**REPORT 2**  
**SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO WORK PROGRAMME**  
**ECONOMY & REGENERATION : 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2012**

<b>Topic Description</b>	<b>Topic suggested by</b>	<b>How the topic will be dealt with</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>

**REPORT 3**  
**PROPOSED OUTLINE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**  
**ECONOMY & REGENERATION : 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2012**

Meeting Date	Topic Description
07/06/12	Presentation and discussion – Dave Furlong & Lisa Thompson, Mole Group Terms of Reference for the Committee – Presentation (David Ball) Role of Scrutiny – Presentation (Alan Veitch) Green Growth in Wirral – – Feedback from referral to Cabinet, 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 Wirral Trade Centre – Notice of Motion – Referral from Council, 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 Affordability and Mortgages including First-Time Buyers – Feedback from referral to Cabinet, 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 Business Support – Feedback from referral to Cabinet, 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 Equality Impact Assessments – Referral from Scrutiny Programme Board, 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2012 Regeneration Tour, 3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2012 Scrutiny Work Programme Forward Plan Regeneration Update
05/09/12	<b>Presentation and discussion – David Downing, Chairman of Drivecompare</b> Trade Centre Scrutiny Review: Update (Report of Working Group – Cllr Mark Johnston, Chair) Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 (Kevin Adderley) Feedback from the Member’s Regeneration / Housing Tour held on 3rd July Shopping Centre Regeneration – Update (David Ball) Investment Manager’s post – Update (David Ball – verbal report) Budget Consultation – Scrutiny Workshops Scrutiny Work Programme Forward Plan Regeneration Update
12/11/12	Presentation and discussion – Member of the Business Community <b>Trade Centre Scrutiny Review – Final Report</b> <b>Welfare Reform and under-occupation – Draft Scope document for future scrutiny review</b> Scrutiny Work Programme Forward Plan Regeneration Update (Exempt Item)

Meeting Date	Topic Description
21/01/13	Presentation and discussion – Member of the Business Community The effect of the economy on youth unemployment Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme Deep Clean scheme in Town Centres The operation of the Free after Three parking scheme Progress reports regarding the Shopping Centre Action Plans Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 2 (Kevin Adderley) Scrutiny Work Programme Forward Plan Regeneration Update Plus other items to add.....
18/03/13	Presentation and discussion – Member of the Business Community Green Growth Working Group – Update report Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 3 (Kevin Adderley) Scrutiny Work Programme Forward Plan Regeneration Update Plus other items to add.....

**REPORT 4**  
**PROGRESS REPORT ON IN-DEPTH PANEL REVIEWS**  
**ECONOMY & REGENERATION : 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2012**

Title of Review	Members of Panel	Progress to Date	Date Due to report to Committee
Trade Centre Scrutiny Review	Cllr Mark Johnston (Chair) Cllr Jean Stapleton Cllr Andrew Hodson	<p><u>As at 02/07/12:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Working Group has met to discuss the draft scope for the review.</li> <li>• The Scope for the review will be finalised and will be reported to Committee in September</li> <li>• A meeting at the Confucius Centre (Calday Grange Grammar School) has been arranged.</li> <li>• Further meetings with Council officers and members of the business, voluntary and community sectors will be arranged as the evidence-gathering for the review continues.</li> </ul> <p><u>As at 09/10/12:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several further evidence-gathering meetings have taken place.</li> <li>• Members have met to discuss draft recommendations for the review.</li> <li>• The final report for the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review is due to be submitted to Committee on 14/11/12.</li> </ul>	End of 2012