



# Cabinet

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Monday, 27 July 2015</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>5.30 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

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

### LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

### 2. CAPITAL MONITORING 2015/16 -QUARTER 1 (APRIL-JUNE 2015) (Pages 1 - 16)

### 3. REVENUE MONITORING 2015/16 - QUARTER 1 (APRIL-JUNE 2015) (Pages 17 - 32)

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

### 4. EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES (Pages 33 - 66)

### ECONOMY

### 5. DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AREA FOR BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE (Pages 67 - 90)

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

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

**7. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

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

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

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

**WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**27 JULY 2015**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>CAPITAL MONITORING 2015/16 QUARTER 1 (APRIL TO JUNE 2015)</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>ACTING SECTION 151 OFFICER</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES</b>
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>YES</b>

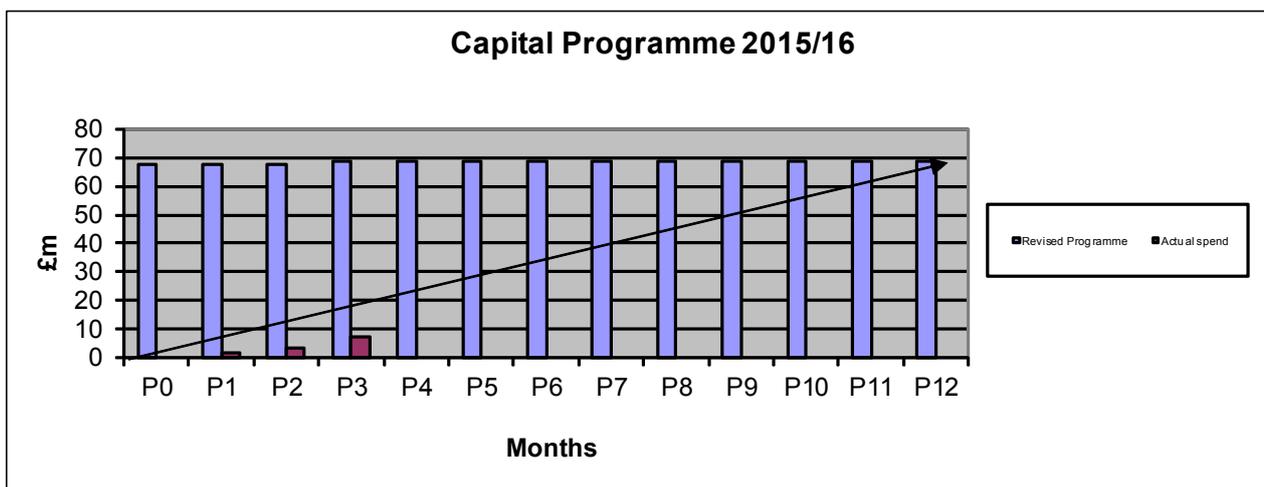
**1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides an update on the progress in delivering the Capital Programme 2015/16 at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2015).

**2 OVERALL POSITION AT END OF QUARTER 1 (30 JUNE 2015)**

2.1 The actual spend against the Capital Programme is summarised in Table 1.

**Chart 1: Capital Programme spend below line of best fit**



**3 ORIGINAL AND PROPOSED CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2015/16**

3.1 The Programme for 2015/16 is subject to change and reflects the Programme agreed by Cabinet on 10 February 2015 together with subsequent amendments. Broadly these reflect the re-profiling identified since the 2014/15 Budget Cabinet. The revisions differ from that reported in the 2014/15 Outturn report which shows re-profiling relating to the 2014/15 programme only, whilst this report also shows post 2014/15 adjustments. Revisions to the programme also include any changes regarding external financial support, primarily the latest grant notifications and any estimated re-profiling of schemes into the 2016/17 year.

- 3.2 To aid the monitoring process, schemes are categorised against five gate points being Conception, Approval, Start Up, Delivery and Completion.

**Table 1: Capital Programme 2015/16 at end of Quarter 1 (30 June)**

	<b>Capital Strategy</b>	<b>Revisions Since Budget Cabinet</b>	<b>Revised Capital Programme</b>	<b>Actual Spend June 2015</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Universal & Infrastructure	8,956	-190	8,766	505
Families – Children	8,517	2,337	10,854	1,054
Families – Adults	8,263	-2,446	5,817	213
Families – Sport & Rec	1,865	1,725	3,590	581
R&E– Env & Regulation	12,633	2,491	15,124	180
R&E– Hsg & Comm Safety	6,412	2,381	8,793	374
R& E – Regeneration	1,808	3,751	5,559	4,322
Transformation Resources	1,600	1,404	3,004	115
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>50,054</b>	<b>11,453</b>	<b>61,507</b>	<b>7,344</b>

- 3.3 As outlined above a number of schemes within the 2014/15 Programme have been reprofiled with expenditure now likely in 2015/16. A smaller number of schemes had spend re-profiled from 2015/16 into the 2014/15 Programme to reflect accelerated progress. Details of significant variances are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Significations variations to the 2015/16 Programme**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Universal &amp; Infrastructure</b>	
<b>Re-profiling</b>	
Building refurbishment to increase occupancy	
Fund to assist land assembly and resale	-643
Park depot rationalisation	-113
	670
<b>Families &amp; Wellbeing – Children</b>	
<b>Re-profiling</b>	
School remodelling and additional classrooms	-550
Condition/Modernisation	1,864
Youth Capital	149
Universal Free School Meals	209
Somerville Mobile Replacement	366
Wirral Youth Zone rephased into 2016/17	0
<b>Grants</b>	
Condition/Modernisation	-1,706
Basic Needs	1,897
<b>Families &amp; Wellbeing – Adults</b>	
Citizen and provider portal	450
Transformation of day service	1,115
Integrated I.T.	1,085

Extra Care Schemes reprofiled to 2016/17	-3,896
Pensby Wood – day service remodelling and additional rooms reprofiled to 2016/17	-1,200
<b>Families &amp; Wellbeing – Sport &amp; Recreation</b>	
<b>Re-profiling</b>	
West Kirby/Guinea Gap/Europa Pools	824
West Kirby Marine Lake	690
<b>Reg &amp; Env – Environment &amp; Regulation</b>	
<b>Re-profiling</b>	
Active Travel	101
Highway Maintenance	146
Bridges	352
Energy schemes (LED Street Lighting)	236
Parks vehicles replacement	684
Allotments	165
Additional Grant – STEP	500
<b>Reg &amp; Env – Housing &amp; Community Safety</b>	
<b>Re-profiling</b>	
LIFT programme	298
DFG/ Aids and adaptations	1,162
Home Improvements	-878
Clearance	519
Improvement for sale grants	180
New House Building Programme	520
Cluster of Empty Homes Grant	650
<b>Reg &amp; Env – Regeneration</b>	
<b>Re-profiling and additional grant</b>	
Other Regional Growth Fund Schemes	3,208
LEP Regional Growth Fund Schemes	1,102
Hamilton Square Access Improvements to 2016/17	-600
<b>Transformation &amp; Resources</b>	
<b>Re-profiling</b>	
I.T. development	1,404
Total of variances below £100,000 each	493
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>11,453</b>

### 3.4 Universal and Infrastructure Services

Cleveland Street Transport Depot works are continuing refurbishing existing buildings to allow a phased move from various parks depots that will reduce revenue implications and/or produce a capital receipt.

Other spend to date includes the continuation of building refurbishment works to increase occupancy, energy efficiency and land assembly.

### **3.5 Families and Wellbeing - Children**

This area of the Programme includes investment in Schools which is essentially funded by Government Grant. The Government Grant announcements have been confirmed annually just prior to the financial year, however this year 3 year announcements have been made providing allocation amounts from 2015/16 – 2017/18. This 3 year allocation will assist in the programming of significant school projects. The works to the buildings are undertaken in co-operation with the schools and, mindful of the impact upon the service, such works are largely arranged for completion outside of term-times wherever possible. These factors impact upon the timing of the actual spend with frequent revisions to be accommodated. A design framework is being developed to allow the use of external Designers i.e. Architects, Mechanical and Electrical engineers, Cost Surveyors to enable schemes to progress in partnership with Local Authority Designers team and Asset Management.

Woodslee Primary School scheme [£550,000] is nearing completion replacing the nursery and creating a new library/resource area.

Fender Primary School scheme to create two additional classrooms and internal remodelling [£600,000] is now on site and progressing well, with anticipated completion October 2015.

Stanley Special School scheme [£750,000] to further develop two classrooms and external remodelling to enable the school to receive additional pupils places to be ready for September 2016.

Legal documentation has been drafted between OnSide Youth Zones and Hill Dickenson and competitive tendering undertaken for the building works in respect of the Youth Zone. A formal planning application is expected early in the new financial year. To date approximately £5m of the overall £6m funding required has been secured with OnSide hoping to secure the rest by July. The Council's contribution is now more likely to be drawn down during 2016/17.

### **3.6 Families and Wellbeing - Adults**

The Integrated I.T. scheme (Liquidlogic) went live during September 2014. The next phase of the project will see the procurement and implementation of the additional modules relating to the citizen and provider portals. Implementation will support the delivery of some Care Act duties from April 2015. £500,000 has been committed in the year to date. Additional modules and implementation costs may increase the committed spend in year.

Transformation of Day Services is ongoing. Plans for the Local Authority implementation have been delayed slightly resulting in some of the capital works being delayed until next year.

### **3.7 Families and Wellbeing – Sport and Recreation**

The programme for the year involves £3.6 million of investment across a range of Leisure facilities.

West Kirby Concourse – phase 1 – creation of the new fitness suite is now open to all user groups. There are some delays with phase 2, which includes remodelling of other areas of the building and completion is now expected during September.

### **3.8 Regeneration and Environment – Environment and Regulation**

This element of the capital programme will involve £15.1 million of investment.

The largest element of the programme is LED lighting scheme. The tender process for the installation has been completed, and installation will commence mid-August. The scheme remains on schedule and the budget savings are expected to be achieved.

Cabinet 20 July 2015 received reports detailing planned use of transport block g and Sustainable Transport Enhancements Package (STEP) funding.

### **3.9 Regeneration and Environment – Housing and Community Safety**

Investment of £8.8 million is planned for this element of the programme. This includes support for the provision and re-provision of new housing through the clearance programme with £1.8 million deferred to 2015/16 from 2014/15 as well as approximately half of the 2014/15 Home Improvement allocation.

The authority has received DCLG funding via Liverpool City Council (acting as the accountable body) of £1.2m for a grant scheme entitled “Cluster of Empty Homes Fund”. This capital funding is to be used in accordance with the bid conditions to bring empty property (including commercial property) into use as housing. £31,657 has been used to support the Council’s Empty Homes Grant programme. The remaining funding has been allocated to contribute to the overall costs of renovating and converting the Old Court House in Manor Road and The Ark, Birkenhead.

Disabled Facilities Grants/Aids and Adaptations continue to be approved and the spend committed but the incurring of this spend is determined by the grant applicants which may result in delays.

### **3.10 Regeneration and Environment – Regeneration**

Approximately £5.6 million of expenditure is forecast in the year for this area. £4.3 million has been incurred to date in respect of Regional Growth Fund activity.

### **3.11 Transformation and Resources**

The programme comprises £3 million of expenditure mainly in respect of the continued programme of IT development. Expenditure of £112,000 has been incurred to date.

## 4 FINANCING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

4.1 Table 3 summarises the financing sources for the original and latest programmes.

**Table 3: Revised Capital Programme Financing**

<b>Capital Programme Financing</b>	<b>Capital Strategy</b>	<b>Revised Programme</b>
	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>
Unsupported Borrowing	19,090	21,410
Capital Receipts	12,693	14,436
Revenue and Reserves	537	1,387
Grants	17,734	24,274
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>50,054</b>	<b>61,507</b>

4.2 Any reprofiling of the Capital Programme which reduces the borrowing requirement will produce one off in-year revenue savings. A permanent saving will only occur if schemes are permanently ceased, otherwise the full budget will be required in 2016/17 when the re-profiled expenditure is incurred.

## 5 PROJECTED LONGER TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME

5.1 Funding for the forecast 2015/16 to 2017/18 Capital Programme is shown in Table 4. This reflects the 2015-18 Capital Programme agreed by Cabinet on 10 February 2015 together with any subsequent amendments for additional reprofiling and subsequent grant notifications.

**Table 4: Capital Programme Financing 2015/16 to 2017/18**

<b>Capital Programme Financing</b>	<b>2015/16 Revised Estimate</b>	<b>2016/17 Revised Estimate</b>	<b>2017/18 Revised Estimate</b>	<b>Total Programme</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Unsupported Borrowing	21,410	9,362	0	30,772
Capital Receipts	14,436	5,445	2,414	22,295
Revenue / Reserves	1,387	120	66	1,573
Grants	24,274	15,075	9,511	47,563
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>61,507</b>	<b>30,002</b>	<b>11,991</b>	<b>102,203</b>

## 6 SUPPORTED AND UNSUPPORTED BORROWING AND THE REVENUE CONSEQUENCES OF UNSUPPORTED BORROWING

6.1 Based on the current cost, £1 million of Prudential Borrowing would result in additional revenue financing costs of £80,000 per annum in the following year. As part of the Capital Strategy 2015/16 to 2017/18 the Council has included an element of prudential borrowing. At Month 3 there is a sum of £30.7 million of new unsupported borrowing included over the three years, which will result in approximately £2.5 million of additional revenue costs detailed at Table 5, if there is no change in the Strategy.

**Table 5: Unsupported Borrowing Forecasts & Revenue Costs**

	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
New Unsupported Borrowing	21,410	9,362	0	0
Cumulative	21,410	30,772	30,772	30,772
Annual Revenue repayment costs				
Cumulative	0	1,713	2,462	2,462

6.2 The re-profiling of the capital programme and the use of internal borrowing i.e. using the Councils cash balances rather than taking out external loans, means that Treasury Management costs are anticipated to be £1 million less in 2015/16. With cash investments currently yielding low rates of return and the interest rate on external loans being much higher it is financially advantageous to use cash balances to fund certain capital projects.

## **7 CAPITAL RECEIPTS POSITION**

7.1 The Capital Programme is reliant on the Council generating capital receipts to finance future schemes. The Capital Receipts Reserve at 1 April 2015 contained £8.3 million of receipts. The table assumes the proposed spend, set out at Section 4.1 is agreed. Receipts and funding assumptions are based upon the latest estimates available.

**Table 6: Projected Capital Receipts position**

	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Capital Receipts Reserve	8,300	364	4,469
In - Receipts Assumption	6,500	9,550	9,550
Out - Funding assumption	-14,436	-5,445	-2,414
Closing Balance	364	4,469	11,605

7.2 There are 3 possible major site disposals. Bids from various developers for the site at Acre Lane are being assessed. Marketing of the Manor Drive site has commenced. The third site is Rock Ferry High School where Secretary of State approval would be required should the Council decide on any sale.

## **8 RELEVANT RISKS**

8.1 The possibility of failure to deliver the Capital Programme will be mitigated by the monthly review by a senior group of officers, charged with improving performance.

8.2 The generation of capital receipts may be influenced by factors outside the authority's control e.g. ecological issues. Lambert, Smith, Hampton are still providing external support.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 No other options have been considered.

## **10 CONSULTATION**

10.1 No consultation has been carried out in relation to this report.

## **11 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

11.1 There are no outstanding actions.

## **12 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

12.1 As yet, there are no implications for voluntary, community or faith groups.

## **13 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The whole report is about significant resource implications.

## **14 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

## **15 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not attached as there are none.

## **16 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 There is no carbon reduction or environmental implications arising directly from this monitoring report.

## **17 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

## **18 RECOMMENDATIONS**

18.1 That Cabinet is asked to note:

- a) The spend to date at Month 3 of £7.3 million, with 25% of the financial year having elapsed;

18.2 That Cabinet is asked to agree and refer to Council:

- a) The revised Capital Programme of £61.5 million (Table 1);

18.3 That the Capital Monitoring report be presented to Cabinet after the end of each quarter, which is in line with Performance Management Monitoring arrangements.

## **19 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

19.1 Regular monitoring and reporting of the Capital Programme enables decisions to be taken faster which may produce revenue benefits and will improve financial control of the Programme.

19.2 Any variations to the Capital Programme are agreed by Cabinet but then referred to Council to formally approve the changes.

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**SUBJECT HISTORY**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Capital monitoring reports, from September 2012	
Capital Programme – Council	25 February 2014
Capital Programme – Council	24 February 2015

<b>Universal &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
Building refurbishment to increase occupancy	2,119	337	2,119	-	-	2,119
Fund to assist land assembly and re-sale	623	63	623	-	-	623
Cleveland St Transport Depot	3,115	-	3,115	-	-	3,115
Park depot rationalisation	1,270	-	1,270	-	-	1,270
Energy efficiency Initiatives	596	105	596	-	-	596
Demolish Stanley Special & External Renovation Work	150	-	150	-	-	150
Demolish Bebington Town Hall and Liscard Municipal	378	-	378	-	-	378
Demolish former Rock Ferry High	395	-	395	-	-	395
Demolish Foxfield	120	-	120	-	-	120
	<b>8,766</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>8,766</b>	-	-	<b>8,766</b>

<b>Families and Wellbeing - CYP</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/ Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
Elleray Park Special School redevelopment	<b>850</b>	198	850	-	-	<b>850</b>
School remodelling and additional classrooms (Primary Places)	<b>2,050</b>		1,800	-	250	<b>2,050</b>
Condition/Modernisation	<b>4,658</b>	397	-	-	4,658	<b>4,658</b>
Basic Need allocation	<b>1,897</b>	66	-	-	1,897	<b>1,897</b>
PFI	<b>150</b>	-	-	150	-	<b>150</b>
Children's centres	<b>53</b>	-	-	-	53	<b>53</b>
Aiming Higher	<b>24</b>	53	-	-	24	<b>24</b>
Youth Capital	<b>149</b>		98	-	51	<b>149</b>
Birkenhead High Girls Academy	<b>80</b>	157	-	69	11	<b>80</b>
Funding for 2 year olds	<b>18</b>	-	-	-	18	<b>18</b>
Universal Free School Meals	<b>209</b>	-	-	-	209	<b>209</b>
Somerville Mobile Replacement	<b>366</b>	134	366	-	-	<b>366</b>
Family Support Scheme	<b>200</b>	49	200	-	-	<b>200</b>
Stanley Special School - additional classrooms, medical/hygiene provision	<b>150</b>	-	150	-	-	<b>150</b>
	<b>10,854</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>3,464</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>7,171</b>	<b>10,854</b>

<b>Families and Wellbeing - DASS</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/ Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
Citizen and Provider Portal for Social and Health Services	617	-	-	-	617	617
Transformation of Day Service	1,115	90	500	-	615	1,115
Integrated IT	1,085	123	1,000	-	85	1,085
Community Intermediate Care Services	1,000	-	-	-	1,000	1,000
Integrated Social Care and Health Learning Disability Service - Girtrell Court	2,000	-	2,000	-	-	2,000
	<b>5,817</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,317</b>	<b>5,817</b>

<b>Families and Wellbeing - Sports &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/ Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
West Kirby Concourse Fitness Suite	112	-	112	-	-	112
Guinea Gap 3G Football pitches	99	-	99	-	-	99
West Kirby/Guinea Gap/Europa Pools	2,024	581	2,024	-	-	2,024
Refurb of Artificial Turf Pitch & perimeter fence repairs at the Tennis & Sports Centre	240	-	240	-	-	240
West Kirby Marine Lake – Integrated accommodation and service delivery	690	-	690	-	-	690
Bidston Tennis Centre re-roofing	425	-	425	-	-	425
	<b>3,590</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>3,590</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,590</b>

<b>Regeneration and Environment - Environment &amp; Regulation</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/ Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
Road Safety	157	14	84	-	73	157
Active Travel	185	13	185	-	-	185
Transportation	104	11	104	-	-	104
Bridges	1,566	-	728	-	838	1,566
Street Lighting	76	18	26	-	50	76
Highway Maintenance	3,105	80	400	-	2,705	3,105
Integrated Transport	1,558	-	-	-	1,558	1,558
Start Active, Play Active, Stay active	34	6	24	10	-	34
Wirral Way - widening and safety improvements	14	-	14	-	-	14
Cemetery Extensions and Improvements	171	-	171	-	-	171
Coast Protection	251	4	251	-	-	251
Energy schemes (LED Street Lighting)	4,236	-	4,236	-	-	4,236
Allotments	165	-	165	-	-	165
Parks Improvements	13	8	-	13	-	13
Royden Park	2	-	-	-	2	2
Parks vehicles replacement	684	23	684	-	-	684
Reeds Lane Play Area	23	3	-	-	23	23
West Kirby Flood Alleviation	1,500	-	-	200	1,300	1,500
Dock Bridges Replacement	280	-	280	-	-	280
Preventative Maintenance to Unclassified and Residential Streets	500	-	500	-	-	500
Preventative Maintenance to Classified Roads	500	-	500	-	-	500
	<b>15,124</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>8,352</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>6,549</b>	<b>15,124</b>

<b>Regeneration and Environment - Housing &amp; Community Safety</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
Aids, Adaptations and Disabled Facility Grants	<b>3,235</b>	263	1,162	-	2,073	<b>3,235</b>
LIFT	<b>298</b>	2	298	-	-	<b>298</b>
Clearance	<b>1,840</b>	16	755	350	735	<b>1,840</b>
Home Improvement	<b>854</b>	66	485	369	-	<b>854</b>
Improvement for sale grants	<b>180</b>	-	-	180	-	<b>180</b>
Empty Property Interventions	<b>236</b>	27	190	46	-	<b>236</b>
New House Building Programme	<b>1,500</b>	-	1,500	-	-	<b>1,500</b>
Cluster of Empty Homes Fund	<b>650</b>	-	-	-	650	<b>650</b>
	<b>8,793</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>4,390</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>3,458</b>	<b>8,793</b>

<b>Regeneration and Environment - Regeneration</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
Other Regional Growth Fund Schemes	<b>3,208</b>	3,208	-	-	3,208	<b>3,208</b>
LEP Regional Growth Fund Schemes - Targeted Assistance	<b>1,102</b>	1,102	-	-	1,102	<b>1,102</b>
Business Investment Grants	<b>780</b>	-	780	-	-	<b>780</b>
The Priory	<b>69</b>	12	-	-	69	<b>69</b>
Hamilton Square Accessibility Improvements	<b>400</b>	-	-	-	400	<b>400</b>
	<b>5,559</b>	<b>4,322</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,779</b>	<b>5,559</b>

<b>Transformation &amp; Resources</b>	<b>Revised Programme £000</b>	<b>Spend to Date £000</b>	<b>Council Resources £000</b>	<b>Revenue/ Reserves £000</b>	<b>Grants £000</b>	<b>Total Funding £000</b>
CCTV cameras and other equipment	100	-	100	-	-	100
I.T Development	2,904	115	2,904	-	-	2,904
	<b>3,004</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>3,004</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,004</b>
<b>Programme Total</b>	<b>61,507</b>	<b>7,344</b>	<b>35,846</b>	<b>1,387</b>	<b>24,274</b>	<b>61,507</b>

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### CABINET

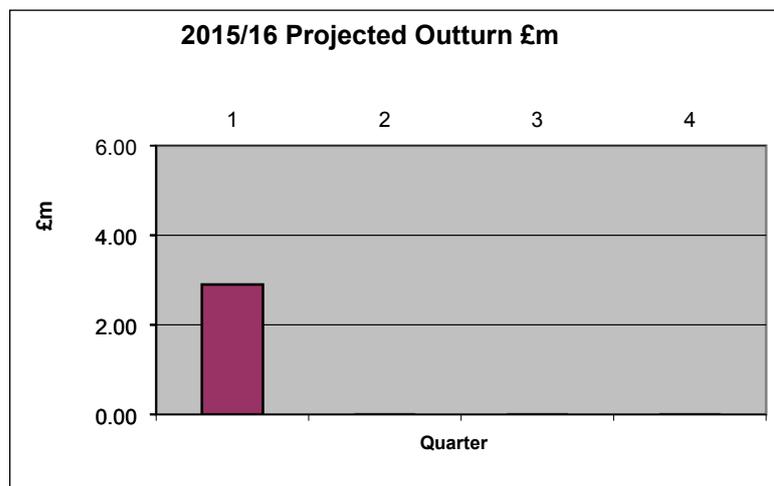
27 JULY 2015

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>REVENUE MONITORING 2015/16 QUARTER 1 (APRIL-JUNE 2015)</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>ACTING SECTION 151 OFFICER</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES</b>
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>YES</b>

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the projected revenue position for 2015/16 as at the end of June 2015. The 2015/16 revenue budget included a savings programme of £38 million. Progress is regularly reviewed and has identified that whilst over £28 million is deliverable in year some slippage has been identified. It is recommended that the 2015/16 budget be adjusted to reflect this through the use of Reserves and an element of the sum set aside in General Fund balances. This leads to a forecast overspend of £2.9 million primarily due to early indications of demand pressures on which further work will be undertaken to confirm, to seek mitigation and also a review of reserves in order to restore the General Fund balances to the required level.
- 1.2 The headline position is shown in the graph below.

**Graph 1: Wirral Council – 2015/16 General Fund Variance**



## 2 CHANGES TO THE AGREED BUDGET

- 2.1 The 2015/16 Budget was agreed by Council on 24 February 2015 and is detailed in Annex 2; any increase in the Budget has to be agreed by full Council. Changes to the Budget since it was set are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: 2015/16 Original & Revised Net Budget by Directorate £000's**

	Original Net Budget	Approved Budget Changes Prior Mths	Approved Budget Changes Quarter 1	Proposed Budget Changes Quarter 1	Revised Net Budget
FWB - Adult Social Care	68,305	-	134	2800	71,239
FWB – Children & Young People,	67,964	-	141	4400	72,505
FWB - Further Areas: Safeguarding, Schools, Leisure, Public Health	7,956	-	431	400	8,787
Regeneration & Environment	90,287	-	-664	-	89,623
Transformation & Resources	31,947	-	-556	-	31,391
Corporate Growth, Savings & Grant	-7,267	-	514	2000	-4,753
Net Cost of Services	259,192	-	-	9600	268,792

- 2.2 The Approved Budget Changes reflect the impact of the completion of the ongoing remodelling and restructuring of Council services. With structures finalised this sees adjustments between Children & Young People, Regeneration & Environment and the Corporate Growth, Savings and Grant budgets. Other movements as a consequence of the restructuring include the transfer of employee budgets between Directorates and the implementation of the Social Worker Progression Framework.
- 2.3 The Proposed Budget changes relate to the review of the savings programme and a realistic assessment of the deliverability of the savings in the current financial year. It is recommended that these be covered by the actions and recommendations set out in Table 5.
- 2.4 The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 4 June 2015 a series of in year savings to Government Department budgets. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2015/16 remains unchanged. Whilst there are reductions in other areas the details are awaited. It is estimated that the reduction in the Department of Health resources may result in an in-year reduction in Wirral's Public Health Grant of up to £2.4 million.
- 2.5 The Chancellor delivered a Budget Statement on 8 July 2015. This was focussed upon welfare reform, which is likely to lead to increased demands for Council support and services, and included the National Living Wage. The latter increases provider costs, particularly within care services, which will lead to increased pressure on service providers to the Council and potentially increased contract costs.

### **3 PROJECTIONS AND KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 The projected outturn position as at the end of June 2015, key issues emerging and Directorate updates are detailed in the following section.

**Table 2: 2015/16 Projected Budget variations by Directorate £000's**

Directorates	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	(Under)	RAGBY Class	Change from prev
			Overspend		
			Quarter 1		
FWB - Adult Social Care	71,239	73,670	2,431	R	
FWB – Children & Young People	72,505	74,505	2,000	R	-
FWB - Further Areas: Safeguarding, Schools, Leisure, Public Health	8,787	8,787	0	G	
Regeneration & Environment	89,623	89,323	-300	B	-
Transformation & Resources	31,391	30,202	-1,189	Y	
Corporate Growth, Savings & Grant	-4,753	-4,753	0	G	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>268,792</b>	<b>271,734</b>	<b>2,942</b>		-

The report classifies the forecast under/overspends for the above areas using a colour RAGBY rating. The ratings are defined as follows:

- Extreme: Overspends **Red** (over +£301k), Underspend **Yellow** (over -£301k).
- Acceptable: **Amber** (+£141k to +£300k), **Green** (range from +£140k to -£140k); **Blue** (-£141k to -£300k).

### 3.2 Directorate Updates

#### Families and Wellbeing: Adult Social Care

3.2.1 There is a shortfall, primarily within adult social care, of £2.8 million relating to delays in the implementation of a number of savings projects which are detailed in Table 4. There is a further £2.4 million in respect of demand pressures within a number of Community care areas for which further work is being undertaken to confirm the projection and identify mitigating actions.

3.2.2 To assist with budget delivery, a number of projects are being supported by the Improvement and Transformation Team. Saving Plans and profiles are being reviewed to identify mitigation and an Implementation Board has been established to review Day Services and challenge financial delivery targets. Further detailed work is being undertaken to further analyse the causes and impact of the demand pressures.

#### Families and Wellbeing: Children and Young People

3.2.3 The forecast shows a shortfall of £4.4 million against current savings (see Table 4) and pressures of £2.9 million which have partly been offset by £0.9 million of mitigation. The increased demands relate to commissioned services and agency costs and include additional foster allowance costs.

## **Families and Wellbeing : Other**

- 3.2.4 The Budget, and the progress on delivery of change, is reviewed at the Directorate Senior Leadership Team meetings. With the Social Worker Progression Framework now implemented there is a rolling programme of recruitment to Social Work positions. Agency costs and placements are being reviewed and the implementation of the framework will enable progress to be made on the required changes. A Project Group meets to review numbers and the Strategic Plan for looked after children is identifying work to develop an adolescent unit and reduce agency foster care numbers/residential care.
- 3.2.5 **Leisure Services:** An adverse variance of £0.4 million is currently forecast relating to slippage against the leisure review saving. Further areas for mitigation will be identified and investigated.
- 3.2.6 **Public Health.** As referred to earlier in the report the Chancellor announced a reduction in the Health Budget which could see an in-year reduction of up to £2.4 million in the Public Health grant.

## **Regeneration and Environment**

- 3.2.7 An underspend of £0.3 million is currently forecast relating to further contract efficiencies within Supported Housing.

## **Transformation & Resources**

- 3.2.8 An underspend of £1.2 million is currently forecast. This is mainly within Treasury Management as a consequence of the continued use of internal funds to minimise the need to externally borrow and the projected slippage within the Capital Programme which delivers one-off in year savings.

## **Remodelling**

- 3.2.9 The savings from remodelling totalled £10.9 million. Slippage is forecast at £2 million as a number of staff consultations have still to be concluded resulting in delayed implementation of savings.

## **4 IMPLEMENTATION OF SAVINGS**

- 4.1 The delivery of the agreed savings is key to the Council's financial health and is tracked at both Council and Directorate level. The Budget for 2015/16 included £38 million of efficiency measures and it was recognised that the delivery of the savings, particularly within Adults and Children's Services was challenging being more of a transformational / change nature. In determining the level of General Fund balances the risk of slippage / non-delivery was assessed at £7.2 million.

**Table 3: Budget Implementation Plan 2015/16 (£000's)**

BRAG	Number of Options	Approved Budget Reduction	Amount Delivered at Q1	To be Delivered see T4
B - delivered	24	14,258	14,258	0
G – on track	19	3,016	2,193	823
A - concerns	19	16,739	1,260	15,479
R - high risk/ not achieved	6	4,011	0	4,011
<b>Total at Quarter 1 2015-16</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>38,024</b>	<b>17,711</b>	<b>20,313</b>

- 4.2 The savings tracker contains an assessment of the 2015/16 savings. The forecasted position includes overspends from the red rated savings. Within the amber rated projects a number will be delivered by the end of 2015/16 but will not fully deliver in year. Overall the latest projections indicate that over £28 million of the planned savings will be achieved with a £9.6 million shortfall forecast.

**Table 4: Shortfall against the 2015/16 target**

Department/Saving	Reasons for Delay	£m
<b>Adult Social Care</b>		
Extra Care Housing	Key housing provider withdrew and now looking for alternative providers and potential sites. Links to slippage in Capital Programme. Full saving slips to 2016/17.	1.3
Girtrell Court shared service	Working with partner provider to agree service specification prior to implementing the capital works for which funding is in the Capital Programme so to 2016/17.	0.3
Cost of Care	Projections are for overspending within Care services meaning the proposed saving will not be delivered in 2015/16. Work by the Directorate to address the pressures and deliver the savings for 2016/17 is on-going.	0.5
Day Services	New company established during 2015/16 Anticipated that 50% of savings deliverable in year with balance in 2016/17.	0.5
Continuing Health Care Appeals	Process involved negotiations on individual cases with progress being made but not as anticipated so partially deliverable in 2015/16.	0.2

<b>Department/Saving</b>	<b>Reasons for Delay</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Children &amp; Young People</b>		
Specialist Services	Looked After Children numbers rising so potential overspend makes saving non-achievable in 2015/16. The Directorate are confident this is still deliverable over a longer timeframe given the structural changes now in place.	1.4
All Age Disability Service	The savings will be delivered but the timescales means the full £0.6 million will not be achieved this year.	0.4
Transport	Whilst numbers of Children & Adults receiving transport have reduced this saving will not be delivered without a fuller review of Transport options which will not be effective in 2015/16.	1.0
Children's Centres	Proposals being considered by Cabinet in July and following consultation the savings will be delivered from early 2016 leaving a shortfall in year.	1.2
Central Strategic services	Proposals to amend internal structures and policies still to be developed so will slip to 2016/17.	0.4
Leisure Review	Work continues of options to deliver the £1 million for 2015/16 including alternative provision but projected shortfall this year.	0.4
Remodelling	Of the overall £10.9 million programme £9.4 million agreed but there are staff consultations to be concluded resulting in delayed implementation.	2.0
<b>Total Savings Slippage</b>		<b>9.6</b>

4.3 In order to fund the slippage a series of actions have been recommended.

**Table 5 : Actions to cover the shortfall in 2015/16**

<b>Use of</b>	<b>£m</b>
Families & Wellbeing Reserve Established from the early delivery of savings by the Directorate in 2013/14 and held to meet potential shortfalls in delivery in future years	3.4
Remodelling Reserve Set up to meet the cost of remodelling and restructuring of the Council so can be applied to meet slippage in the delivery of remodelling savings	2.0
General Fund balances Included £7.2 million identified as being based on the risk of non-delivery of savings so part of this sum used to meet the balance of the shortfall	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.6</b>

- 4.4 The Directorates will work to identify compensatory savings which will be reported to Cabinet as part of the Monitoring report and these will be used to replenish the General Fund balances.

## 5 GROWTH

- 5.1 An allowance for the impact of demographic changes, inflation and other risks has been incorporated into the 2015/16 budget. Details of these allowances are contained within the Budget Book and Forecasts 2015/18 approved by Budget Council on 24 February 2015.

## 6 INCOME AND DEBT

- 6.1 Revenue and Income falls into four broad areas for reporting purposes. Amounts raised and collected in the year are shown below.

**Table 6: Amount to be collected in 2015/16**

	2015/16	2015/16	
	Collectable	Collected	%
	£000	£000	
Council Tax	139,663	38,739	27.7%
Business Rates	71,214	21,905	30.8%
Fees and charges – Adults & Children	29,165	9,611	33%
Fees and charges – all other services	26,314	16,445	63%

### COUNCIL TAX

- 6.2 Compared with June 2014 the collection performance is down by 0.2% and recovery action has commenced with 28,168 reminders and 5,820 summonses issued to date.
- 6.3 The major change this year relates to the full removal of the local Pensioner Discount for 2015/16. This affected 11,482 Band A-D, 70+ households who previously received a 5% discount. In 2014/15 the discount from Band E-H households was removed with a reduction in the discount from 7.76% to 5%.

### BUSINESS RATES

- 6.4 The % collected at June 2015 of 30.8% compares favourably with the 27.6% at June 2014.
- 6.5 The Government is undertaking a fundamental review of Business Rates including consultation with interested parties. It has been indicated that any changes would need to raise the same amount as Business Rates does now, some £27 billion and the Government has also indicated that it prefers a property based tax. The outcome of the review is expected to feature in the Government Budget 2016.

## **DEBTORS**

- 6.6 At the end of June 2015 the arrears stood at £22.8 million which compares to £21.4 million at June 2014. With the date being a moment in time the timing of the sending of bills impacts upon the reported position particularly with month-end and year-end bills. Recovery action continues to be undertaken to minimise arrears and additional temporary staff will support this work.

## **7 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The possible failure to deliver the Revenue Budget is being mitigated by:
- Senior Leadership Team / Directorate Teams reviewing the financial position.
  - Tracking system of savings options to monitor progress.
  - Benefits Realisation Group monitors the delivery of key change projects.
  - Use of temporary additional support to assist with revenues collection.

## **8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 Any option to improve the monitoring and budget accuracy will be considered.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 No consultation has been carried out in relation to this report.

## **10 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

- 10.1 There is an ongoing requirement to identify during the financial year necessary actions to mitigate any forecast overspend.

## **11 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 11.1 As yet there are no implications for voluntary, community or faith groups.

## **12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL, IT, STAFFING AND ASSETS**

- 12.1 On 10 February 2015 Cabinet agreed to the level of General Fund balance for 2015/16 being based upon a risk calculation and a minimum of £17.4 million. The level is kept under review during the year to reflect changing circumstances and in-year developments.
- 12.2 As reported to Cabinet on 13 July 2015 the 2014/15 financial year saw an underspend of £0.5 million on the revenue budget, With the release of Insurance Fund Reserve this added £1.4 million to the balances at 31 March 2015.

- 12.3 As referred to in this report the delivery of the large savings programme brings significant risks of delay (slippage). The opening balance contained £7.2 million specifically against this risk of which £4.2 million is to be used to meet the in-year shortfall set out in Section 4.

**Table 7: Summary of the projected General Fund balances**

Details	£m
Balance 31 March 2015 when setting the Budget 2015/16	+17.4
Add; Increase following closure of 2014/15 Accounts	+1.4
Less Transfer to General Fund	-4.2
Less: Potential overspend at June 2015	-2.9
Projected balance 31 March 2016	+11.7

- 12.4 The requirement to replenish the General Fund balances to the minimum level will be addressed through Directorates identifying potential underspends in the current financial year together with a mid-year review of the Earmarked Reserves. The Reserves excluding School balances totalled £71.5 million at 1 April 2015. These include reserves relating to the cost of Council remodelling, mitigation and specific project support and ongoing financial risks.

- 12.5 There are no IT, staffing or asset implications arising directly out of this report.

### **13 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The entire report concerns the duty of the Council to avoid a budget shortfall. The Chief Finance Officer has a personal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 section 114A to make a report to the executive if it appears to them that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources available to it to meet that expenditure.

### **14 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 This report is essentially a monitoring report which reports on financial performance.

### **15 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

### **16 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 16.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## 17 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 17.1 That the Revenue Budget 2015/16 be amended to reflect the re-profiling of the delivery of the savings programme with this funded through contributions from the Families & Wellbeing Reserve, Remodelling Reserve and General Fund balances.
- 17.2 That Officers identify actions to reduce the projected overspend of £2.9 million, to mitigate against any in-year funding reductions for Public Health and to replenish General Fund balances.
- 17.3 That the Financial Monitoring report be presented to Cabinet after the end of each quarter which is in line with Performance Management monitoring arrangements.

## 18 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 18.1 The Council, having set a Budget at the start of the financial year, needs to ensure that the delivery of this Budget is achieved. Consequently there is a requirement to regularly monitor progress so that corrective action can be taken when required which is enhanced with the monthly reporting of the financial position.

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## ANNEXES

Annex 1 General Fund Revenue Budget 2015/16  
Annex 2 Income and Debt

## SUBJECT HISTORY

Council Meeting	Date
Since September 2012 Revenue monitoring reports have been submitted to Cabinet. Budget Council	24 February 2015

## GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16

## ORIGINAL BUDGET AGREED BY COUNCIL ON 24 FEBRUARY 2015

Directorate/Service Area	Original Budget	Variances	Revised Budget
	£000	£000	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Families and Wellbeing			
Adult Social Services	68,305	134	68,439
Children and Young People	67,964	141	68,105
Further Areas - Public Health, Schools, Sports and Recreation	7,956	431	8,387
Regeneration and Environment	90,287	-664	89,623
Transformation and Resources	31,947	-556	31,391
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>266,459</b>	<b>-514</b>	<b>265,945</b>
Corporate Growth	457	-400	57
Corporate Savings	-4,068	914	-3,154
Education Services Grant	-3,656	-	-3,656
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>259,192</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>259,192</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Revenue Support Grant	64,281	-	64,281
Business Rates Baseline	33,266	-	32,266
Business Rates Top Up	41,287	-	41,287
Business Rates Section 31 Grants	2,193	-	2,193
Council Tax Requirement	114,210	-	114,210
Council Tax Freeze Grant	1,358	-	1,358
New Homes Bonus	2,597	-	2,597
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>259,192</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>259,192</b>
<b>Statement of Balances</b>			
As at 1 April 2015	17,400	1,400	18,800
Contributions to/from Balances	0	-	0
<b>Forecast Balances 31 March 2016</b>	<b>17,400</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>18,800</b>

## Note:

This table will be updated for agreed variances during the year.

Balances as at 1 April 2015 updated following completion of the Accounts for 2014/15.

**INCOME AND DEBT**

The following shows the collection progress for Council Tax, Business Rates, Accounts Receivable and Benefits.

**COUNCIL TAX**

The following statement compares the amount collected for **Council Tax** in the period 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 with the amount collected in the same period in 2014/15:

	<b>Actual 2015/16 £000s</b>	Actual 2014/15 £000s
Cash to Collect	<b>139,663</b>	137,208
Cash Collected	<b>38,739</b>	38,330
% Collected	<b>27.7%</b>	27.9%

**Council Tax Support Scheme**

Council Tax benefits were abolished at the end of 2012/13 and replaced by Council Tax Support. £27 million is currently in payment and the numbers of awards as at 30 June 2015 are as follows:

Number of pensioners	<b>15,066</b>
Number of vulnerable (working age)	<b>9,036</b>
Number of working age	<b><u>11,826</u></b>
Number of <b>Council Tax Support</b> recipients	<b><u>35,928</u></b>

Council Tax Support claimants have dropped from 36,231 to 35,928 (303) since the beginning of the financial year.

**Council Tax Discretionary Policy as at 30 June 2015**

Period 1 April 2015 – 30 June 2015  
1 award and 23 refusals in this period.

**BUSINESS RATES**

The following statement compares the amount collected for **National Non-Domestic Rates** for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 with the amount collected for the same period in 2014/15:

	<b>Actual 2015/16 £000</b>	Actual 2014/15 £000
Cash to Collect	<b>71,214</b>	71,310
Cash Collected	<b>21,905</b>	19,714
% Collected	<b>30.8%</b>	27.6%

## ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

The table below shows the directorates and amount of debt at each recovery stage:

Directorate Description	Less than 10 days	1st reminder	2nd reminder	3rd reminder	Total at 30.06.15
Chief Executive	£196,692	£8,903	£5,809	£785,378	<b>£996,782</b>
Neighbourhood	£30,899	£330	£330	£18,317	<b>£49,876</b>
Transformation & Resources	£1,753,349	£893,419	£98,023	£1,800,659	<b>£4,545,450</b>
Families & Wellbeing	£3,684,624	£1,198,955	£1,497,859	£9,757,775	<b>£16,139,213</b>
Regeneration & Environment	£493,817	£37,909	£87,859	£852,609	<b>£1,472,194</b>
Policy & Performance	£3,005	£0	£0	£1,600	<b>£4,605</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£6,144,677</b>	<b>£2,139,186</b>	<b>£1,691,421</b>	<b>£13,223,453</b>	<b>£23,198,737</b>

The above figures are for invoices in respect of the period up to the end of June 2015. Payments as well as amendments such as write-offs and debt cancellations continue to be made after this date on all these accounts. There is a further deduction of £353,769 to be made for unallocated payments at month end leaving a balance of **£22,844,968**

## BENEFITS

The following statement details the number of claimants in respect of benefit and the expenditure for Tenants and those in receipt of Council Tax Support up to 30 June 2015:

	2015/16	2014/15
Number of <b>Private Tenant</b> recipients	<b>30,233</b>	32,221
Total rent allowance expenditure	<b>£38,615,749</b>	
<i>Number under the Local Housing Allowance Scheme (included in the above)</i>	11,698	12,396
	£14,818,686	
Number of <b>Council Tax Support</b> recipients	<b>35,928</b>	37,578
Total Council Tax Support expenditure	<b>£27,028,551</b>	
Total expenditure on benefit to date	<b>£65,644,300</b>	

The following statement provides information concerning the breakdown according to client type as at 30 June 2015 and gives the early year numbers to show the shift in sector by benefit claimants during the year.

	<b>30.06.15</b>	31.3.15
Claimants in the Private Rented Sector	<b>13,715</b>	13,723
Claimants in the Social Rented Sector	<b>16,518</b>	16,271
Owner Occupiers	<b>10,180</b>	10,112
 Total claimants by age group		
- under 25 years old	<b>2,213</b>	2,238
- 25 – 60 years old	<b>21,290</b>	20,921
- over 60 years old	<b>16,910</b>	16,947

There are 40,413 benefit recipients in Wirral as at 30 June 2015.

### **Under Occupancy regulations**

From 1 April 2013 property size criteria was introduced to working age tenants of social landlords (Registered Providers). Where a claimant is deemed to be occupying accommodation larger than they reasonably require, Housing Benefit is restricted:-

- By 14% in 2,550 cases
- By 25% in 628 cases

The number of claims affected does fluctuate. The numbers above are a snapshot at 30 June 2015

### **Housing Benefit Fraud and Enquiries – 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015**

New Cases referred to Fraud team in period	473
Successful Prosecution/Administration penalty/caution	26
Tenancy Fraud	0

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

The table profiles Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) administration and associated spend. DHP is not a payment of Housing Benefit and is funded separately from the main scheme. Since the introduction of Welfare Reform and associated impacts, additional funding has been made available.

The Government contribution for 2015/16 is £736,570 with an overall limit of £1,841,425 which the Authority must not exceed. The difference must come from the Authority's own Expenditure. It was agreed to supplement the Government contribution by a Local Authority contribution of £300,000, giving a total budget in respect of 2015/2016 of £1,036,570.

The present level of spend is not reflective of a realistic position as the service area is currently dealing with a backlog of work items, including applications for Discretionary Housing Payment. The strain on the available budget remains high and is consistent with that in respect of 2014/2015, meaning that the fund will be fully utilised.

date	Number of awards	current awards	committed awards up to 31/03/2016	% spent (committed) of Govt cont
08/04/2015		£4,687.23	£40,158.74	4%
05/05/2015	864	£40,421.27	£70,031.94	7%
01/06/2015	934	£47,148.86	£94,694.10	9%
02/07/2015	1041	£103,253.24	£208,173.93	20%

### Local Welfare Assistance

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was, up until March 2015, directly funded by Government grant.

The Council Budget 2015/16 includes £900,000 held in a reserve for this fund following the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding from 1 April 2015. The current scheme is in place until 31 July 2015 and a Task & Finish Scrutiny Review Panel have reviewed the position and reported to Cabinet their findings and recommendations on how the scheme should be taken forward from 1 August 2015.

The outcome being that the Council continues to administer and maintain the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme with the remaining budget available in line with the current scheme to 31 July 2015 and from August 2015 in line with the amended Scheme.

No. of Awards 2015/16		Total Awarded	Cumulative expenditure
April	673	£38,896.60	£38,896.60
May	564	£26,315.11	£65,211.71
June	754	£42,240.12	£107,451.83

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### CABINET

27<sup>th</sup> July 2015

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Early Years and Children's Centre Review: Outcome of Consultation</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>Cllr Tony Smith</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>Yes</b>

#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Wirral Early Years and Children Centre Review presented to Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014 made recommendations about the development of a new model of service delivery, supported by an outcomes framework to ensure that Wirral's youngest children have the best start in life, evidenced through their readiness for school.

The Review was prompted by the need to save £1.5 million from the Councils' Early Years and Children's Centre budget, reducing the budget to £3.080 million. The Review also recognised that the service had not been reviewed since 2002, although the resources available to deliver this service have in recent years reduced significantly. The service also required a radical shift in thinking to meet current policy and legislative requirements.

Since this Review has been published there has been even greater emphasis placed on improving children's readiness for school through, the Council Plan: A 2020 Vision, Wirral's recent designation as a Vanguard site to deliver joined up health and care services and the recently published Ofsted Early Years report, which particularly emphasises narrowing the gap in outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This Cabinet report is operational in nature; it requests that Cabinet reviews the feedback from the consultation about the proposed changes and authorises officers to take a series of steps to ensure the service is in a stable and financially viable position. It will provide a platform for future developments to meet ambitious outcomes for our youngest children and their families, as summarised at point 6.0 of this report.

- 1.2 The decision made by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014, that officers should commence consultation on a proposed new model for delivering early years services was called-in under the Council's scrutiny arrangements which resulted in the consultation being published for public feedback on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The

consultation closed on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2015, and this report provides Cabinet with the feedback received.

- 1.3 This report makes a number of recommendations to Cabinet about the delivery of early years and children's centre services. This includes the approach to delivering outcome focused provision in an integrated way with partners in local communities through: three hubs, six satellite buildings and services commissioned through the two nursery schools.
- 1.4 This report recommends that a weighted funded model is adopted which takes account of levels of deprivation and need across pre-determined reach footprints within constituency areas, that this supports a flexible and well trained workforce and that services are commissioned and delivered across a range of different disciplines, including the voluntary community and faith sector.
- 1.5 The recommendations informed by the consultation findings will deliver the agreed savings of £1.5million. However, there will be slippage in 2015/6 which at this stage is likely to result in a shortfall of £1.2 million. This position will be kept under close review.
- 1.6 Cabinet are asked to consider the consultation feedback which informs the revised delivery model and to authorise officers to commence implementation of the model.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 2.1 Between April and August 2014 a strategic review of Early Years and Children's Centres was undertaken, which was overseen by a core group of cross organisational representatives. This Review considered a local approach to securing and delivering improved outcomes for young children and their families in Wirral. It was driven by the requirement to make financial efficiencies and was informed by national developments. Amongst the findings from the Review was that the services being offered required transformation and that strategic engagement and sign up from a range of partner organisations was considered fundamental to collectively make a difference to our youngest children and their families.
- 2.2 The Early Years and Children's Centre Review was presented to Cabinet Members in September 2014 with four key recommendations developed from the review findings:
  - Targeting the offer – Children's Centres to play a key role in providing targeted early help to those families who need it, to reduce the number of children referred to social care and increase those more ready to learn when they go to school, which will be evidenced by improvement in EYFS outcomes and a narrowing of the gap in achievement and attainment.
  - Integration and Collaboration – Develop better working relationships and stronger partnerships with other key services and organisations that provide early childhood services.
  - Outreach model – develop outreach services to operate across constituency areas based on levels of need. In addition, an early year's support team would

be established that would deliver the wider elements of the early year's offer that meets the local authority statutory duties for early years.

- Children's Centres – a new approach to delivery through one main Hub in each Constituency area that delivers the full core purpose offer and one outreach or satellite centre. It is anticipated that the remaining buildings be utilised with partners and therefore offer reduced, though more flexible, children's centre services based on local need.

- 2.3 An underlying principle of the review and the consultation feedback was an acknowledgement that the value of the service lay in the skills and experience of the people who deliver services and not just in the buildings themselves.
- 2.4 This Review took place against a backdrop of inadequate practice within the service (brought into sharp focus through the inspections of the Birkenhead Children's Centre Group in May 2014 and subsequently the West Wirral Children's Centre Group in January 2015). Significant issues were raised for the Council around performance monitoring of activity in the Children's Centres, use of data to shape and improve service provision and leadership and governance. The lessons from these inspections, as well as the improvements and recommendations from the more recent re-inspection of Birkenhead (April 2015), have been carefully considered when developing this model.
- 2.5 The proposals within the Review have sought to present a viable delivery model which takes account of the finance, resource and policy challenges facing early year's services, including those to come from changes to government guidance and regulatory frameworks.
- 2.6 The Review outcomes are intended to facilitate a responsive and joined up approach with partners working with and through children's centres to deliver education, care and health services locally to young children and their families and to ensure that all available resources are used collectively to drive up standards and outcomes. Section 4 of the Childcare Act, 2006 has particular relevance in placing a duty on commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus to work together with Councils in their arrangements for improving the well-being of young children and their families and securing integrated early childhood services.

Since this Review was undertaken there have been a number of local and national developments, most notably the production of the Wirral Council Plan: A 2020 Vision which contains 20 outcomes for 2020. This Plan includes the ambitious outcome that children are ready for school:

*We must make sure that every child is equipped with the emotional, social and developmental skills to be ready to start school and to learn. We achieve this through a range of early interventions, engagement and support for families within our communities.*

Delivering the Council Plan will prioritise and build on the work undertaken so far; it will set out a broader policy context to secure improved outcomes for current and future generations of children. This work is being driven and supported by local politicians and will determine a mechanism for continuous improvement and ongoing change.

The development of integrated services with partners will also be supported by Wirral's designation as a Vanguard site, to deliver integrated health and care services to meet need as early as possible in local communities; *ensuring children have the best start* in life is a key outcome in Wirral's successful Vanguard bid.

Finally, Ofsted published their Early Years report on Monday 13 July 2015. This report noted that:

*While it is encouraging that outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are rising in line with their peers, there is no sign of the gap narrowing in any substantial way.*

### **3.0 CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Extensive and inclusive consultation on a proposed model of delivery was undertaken from the 16th February to 27th March 2015. All stakeholders, including service users, wider residents and partners were able to feed into the process through a range of methods, including participation at public events, online by completing the consultation feedback form (which could also be completed as a paper version with support available if needed).
- 3.2 This engagement activity resulted in 934 consultation questionnaires being received and over 300 service users, residents and other stakeholders attending and contributing to consultation events.
- 3.3 A full overview of the consultation methodology is presented in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 In addition to the consultation feedback, two petitions were received, firstly from Wallasey with 375 signatures and West Wirral with 657 signatures. These petitions opposed the proposed changes to the service, receipt was acknowledged and the feedback they provided has been considered as part of this consultation process.

### **4.0 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK AND RESPONSE**

This section of the report provides an outline of the main themes of the feedback conveyed through the consultation events, the questionnaire and various other communications and representations which were received. A fuller summary of the main themes of the feedback is available in Appendix 1 of this report. More extensive responses from the consultation feedback are published on the Council website. A full copy of all responses, redacted where appropriate, is available in the members room.

- 4.1 The following sections outline the high level themes from the consultation events, feedback forms and stakeholder events that required consideration for the future early years and children's centre service offer.

#### **4.1.1 Targeting the offer**

There was consistent agreement with the proposal that children's centre services target early help to those families that need it the most, with nearly 70% of

respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This was further reinforced by comments from feedback forms, which also noted that attention must be given to avoid stigmatisation of families for accessing a targeted children's centre services and that the universal and community focus of the service is not lost. Much will depend on the needs analysis that must be done on a thorough, inclusive basis to ensure the reach of the service and improved outcomes for families are maximised

#### 4.1.2 Integration and Collaboration

Over 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to develop more integrated arrangements with other services and organisations that provide services for children and their families. Comments were also received in this area, focussing on ensuring that opportunities for improving the service and outcomes were maximised through partnership working.

#### 4.1.3 Outreach Model

There was support to retain staff over buildings and that staff should deliver outreach services where they were needed and use the buildings differently. 46.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal for staff to work as an outreach team across a constituency area. Key issues for consideration in the development of a new model included ensuring that outreach supported the ambition to deliver services tailored to local needs, and to ensure that wherever possible relationships built up by staff over time were not lost.

#### 4.1.4 Children's Centres

The highest level of agreement for the proposal for a hub and satellite outreach model came from respondents in the Birkenhead constituency (37%) with the strongest level of disagreement coming from the Wallasey constituency area (41%) closely followed by the West Wirral area (39%) and South Wirral (34%) where responses indicated that centres remain unchanged. Within South Wirral 40% disagreed with the named hub at Eastham, with feedback from group events consistently indicating that the centre at Bromborough should be considered. Key points for consideration included; concerns regarding the cost and accessibility of transport, views about the appropriateness of the proposed sites, and a perception that the proposal could lead to outright closure of sites.

#### 4.1.5 Impact of the proposals

In relation to ongoing access to early years services in the context of the proposed changes to a hub and satellite model, 20% of respondents indicated that the proposals would have no impact, 26.8% felt they would continue to use the service but less often and just over 25% would continue to access services even if this was at another centre or through an early years provider and outreach in the community

### **5.0 REVISED DELIVERY MODEL**

5.1 Following full consideration of the responses received from the consultation, petitions and the current financial context for the service, a revised delivery model for early childhood services to children pre-birth to five years, as well as prospective parents is set out below:

### 5.1.1 Targeted outreach:

- Staff Teams will be developed for each constituency area to deliver effective outreach working based on need and within the available budget.
- The approaches to outreach will be based on a more targeted offer where there is evidence of 'what works', supporting engagement, participation and access to a range of universal and targeted services. This will necessitate working flexibly and persistently to facilitate parents to engage and receive support they need to make relevant positive changes, to improve their own and their child's outcomes.
- Staff will deliver from a range of sites that could include: family homes, children's centres, schools, and a range of community venues. In addition, they will work alongside partners, being more responsive and focussed to service and community needs rather than the pressure currently presented to ensure building opening times despite need or usage.
- Take up of services is focussed on targeting early years and support to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families in particular, to ensure an increase in take up of the two year olds entitlement by eligible families

### 5.1.2 Partners working through children's centres:

- We will work closely with families, communities and all relevant partners across the public, voluntary, community and faith sector, including childcare providers to secure the best possible outcomes for our youngest children and their families.
- Early years and children's centre services will better align with partners; in particular health delivery seeing a joint service offer that avoids duplication, creates clear pathways for intervention and improved outcomes.
- Children's centres will continue to work in the context of a universal offer as a point of access for information and support for all families, with targeted support being offered to those families most in need of a service.
- Links with key initiatives across Wirral will be enhanced, such as with the Community Hub Schools, Vision 2018 and the Vanguard model.
- A memorandum of understanding will be drawn up with each key partner notably health visiting and midwifery services and job centre plus. Internal local authority partnerships will be strengthened in order to identify sooner and more seamlessly, those families with a child under 5 who need support the most, for example, social care, housing needs and economic development.
- Close working arrangements with health visitors are currently being developed to support the rollout of the 2 year old integrated review. This will greatly improve early identification of need and enable the development of service responses and direct support for families.

### 5.1.3 Hub and satellite children's centres:

- It is proposed that Council provision for children pre-birth to 5 years and their families will be co-ordinated (alongside partners) through three hub children's centres, six satellite buildings and commissioned services from two nursery schools.
- The hubs and satellites, also shown in Appendix 2 are as follows:
  - Birkenhead: Hub would be Brassey Gardens Children's Centre and satellites would be Birkenhead and Tranmere (Cathcart Street) and Rock Ferry Children's Centres
  - Wallasey: Hub would be Seacombe Children's Centre and satellite New Brighton Children's Centre
  - West and South Wirral: Hub would be Pensby Children's Centre and satellites would be West Kirby, Bromborough and New Ferry Children's Centres
- This will ensure sufficient geographic coverage across all constituency areas within the available budget, ensuring there is a named children's centre for each child under 5.

*Appendix 3 provides a brief description of the role of: Hub and Satellite Centres Extended School/Services, Targeted Groups, Targeted work and Outreach.*

#### 5.1.4 Use of Data

- There will be improved use of data, in particular population level data through public health in order to focus planning across all constituency areas, target outreach services appropriately and develop community partnership to extend and shape provision in non-target areas
- The systematic and routine sharing of health data, child protection and education data (at population and individual child level, such as live birth data) is key to joint working and plans are in place to enhance and enable this.

#### 5.1.5 Early Years Support and Quality

- The early years support team will meet the Council's statutory duties for early years including the information duty through the family information service, childcare sufficiency assessment, administration of the 2 year old entitlement and the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). There will be more focussed support to childcare providers where they are not meeting the regulatory framework set by Ofsted will be key.
- The Team will work to ensure that early years childcare provision effectively complements the children centre service to support the needs of vulnerable children and their families, in particular through monitoring take up of the 2,3 and 4 year old entitlement and the EYPP.
- The impact of children's centre services will be closely monitored and performance managed to give confidence that the outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families are being met effectively. This will build an evidence base around the impact of the approach.

#### 5.1.6 Funding model

5.1.7 Informed by the views about targeting the offer in the consultation feedback and other models adopted nationally, it is proposed that a revised funding approach is implemented to ensure children and families who need services most receive a targeted offer (whilst not losing the universal community focus of the service). It is proposed that the staffing and other costs are allocated on a clearly defined basis that reflects the ambition of the service within the resources available.

5.1.8 The funding model has been developed using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), which is also used locally to allocate some school funding. In addition the model will take account of the number of births and an indication of the percentage of children in an area requiring social care support. The model will bring parity and see some resources targeted to deprivation and disadvantage and some allocated universally. It will support the allocation of staffing and other costs on a clearly defined basis.

5.1.9 The table at Appendix 4 details a working model of how it is proposed that the available funding of £3,080,000 for the service will be allocated.

5.1.10 The model sets out staffing resources to reflect an allocation for universal / targeted outreach, early years home visits and early intervention family work:

- **Outreach working** ensures access to those who most need support. This reflects the IDACI tool to identify the numbers of children under 5 within the pre-determined reach areas living in income deprived households. The model uses a differentiated ratio of staff based on levels of deprivation and within a pre-determined reach footprint for each local super output area (LSOA), ie a higher ratio of staff to children in the reach area, where income deprivation is higher.
- **The early year's home visiting** allocation is a universal strand of work based on the total number of live births within a reach area. This provides a resource allocation enabling a visit within 6 months to all families where there has been a new birth, complimenting not duplicating other professionals visiting the family and ensuring early identification of family level need.
- **Early intervention** resources are allocated on a weighted model based on reach area, level of need and levels of referrals for social care support and wider outcomes (i.e. health and education outcomes). This is targeted support offering direct or group intervention based on an 18 hour period of intervention for families referred to the service over 6 weeks. (i.e. – 6 week package of support X 3 hours per week).
- Building costs will be allocated to cover basic premises and running costs, this has not been set until transitional arrangements for buildings have been confirmed

#### 5.1.7 Expressions of interest

A number of expressions of interest have been received by organisations interested in use of buildings, shared use of buildings or to work in partnership with the

Council in providing services. Further work to progress this and to support transitional arrangements, will take place alongside the corporate asset management team.

## **6.0 SUMMARY**

This report responds to the Review of Early Years and Children's Centres. It sets out changes required to modernise the service and make it compliant with the required national standards and legislative framework. It also responds to the need to make savings of £1.5 million and to target the available resources in a way which are most likely to improve children's readiness for school.

Whilst this report recommends a reduction in designated Children Centre's, through a Hub and Satellite model; it does not propose the closure of any children's centre buildings.

It is proposed that a revised approach is adopted to deploying resources which is most likely to reach the most disadvantaged children in Wirral, this will be done through the application of a balanced funding formula based on need and the use of proven tools and models. This will result in some settings experiencing a significant reduction in council funding, most notably children's centre services delivered on the two nursery school sites. In each instance work will be undertaken through advisory boards and the school governing bodies to jointly plan how to mitigate the impact of these changes on children and families; these changes will come into effect in early 2016.

This report largely focuses on the Council resources and the reconfiguration of Council services used to meet the needs of children and their families pre-birth through to five years of age. However, as stated in the review and through consultation feedback, services and support provided to our youngest children must in future be developed and delivered through much greater integration with partners, including parents and families.

It is evident that there is significant money and resources invested across Wirral in our youngest children and their families. This includes for example, the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer, some of which is delivered through schools, health visiting and midwifery services, private and voluntary sector spend, services arranged, delivered and directly purchased by parents, in addition to the Council's spend. Determining how this money and these resources are collectively invested to secure the best outcomes for children and families, will form the next steps to implement The Council Plan: A Vision for 2020.

The implementation of this Review is intended to provide a secure and stable platform from which to deliver an ambitious, joint plan to ensure children in Wirral have the best start in life, evidenced by them being ready for school.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 A corporate project group has been established and has met regularly to oversee consultation feedback and progress a project plan. The group will continue to have oversight of the implementation programme.

- 7.2 The key risk for this project is in regard to the future viability of the service, in terms of both its performance and financial position, should no change to its operation be agreed. Further risks include negative Ofsted inspections, potential additional costs relating to building management and, most importantly, challenges to the ability to deliver positive outcomes for children and families.
- 7.3 There is a reputational risk from the disruption to services which will be required to achieve the necessary changes. This will be mitigated wherever possible through close partnership working. A risk log that records and assesses risk has been collated as part of the overall project plan. This is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the project group.
- 7.4 There is a risk from the plans not being fully implemented, within the specified period. This will be kept under close review by the project group and implementation will be reassessed accordingly.
- 7.5 This Review has been underway for a considerable period of time and staff will continue to be impacted by any subsequent changes arising from pending decisions that come from the review. The process to implement new staffing arrangements will require a clear plan and relevant HR processes applied and systematically followed.
- 7.6 The risk that the Department for Education (DfE) could claw back capital grant funding in respect of children's centres is mitigated through the proposed future usage of the buildings and an agreement of a deferral will be progressed with the DfE once a decision has been secured.

## **8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 Council has made a commitment that all decisions related to the budget and service design should be underpinned by comprehensive and genuine consultation with all stakeholders. The proposals and recommendations within this report come as a result of such consultation and represent a shift in position from the initial proposed delivery model, which was published for consultation.
- 8.2 The main changes are a reduction from four hubs to three, with one main hub serving South and West Wirral and an increase in satellites from four to six. This is to increase local access points for delivery and to reduce the amount of administrative overheads. In South Wirral it is proposed that there is a move from Eastham to Bromborough. Additionally, the indicative figures set out in the consultation document have been revised based on the application of a balanced funding formula based on need and the use of proven tools and models.
- 8.3 This revised position represents the model which most closely meets the needs of the local population, and has been arrived at through extensive debate with stakeholders and families, and has considered data analysis of both need and deprivation, geographic cover, and feedback received from people using the services.

## **9.0 CONSULTATION**

9.1 There is a long-standing commitment to extensive consultation with local communities. The legal responsibilities regarding consultation and engagement are set out below. This consultation exercise represents a comprehensive and genuine attempt to engage with all key stakeholders within a wide service area, and to take their views on board in the co-design of a completely redesigned service offer. The redesigned proposal contained within this report, following this engagement exercise, is evidence of the open and constructive nature of this consultation.

## **10.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

10.1 This report responds to the Cabinet decision from 11th September 2014, with no further actions being outstanding.

## **11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

11.1 During the consultation period, partners were invited to submit expressions of interest for the delivery of services through the Children's Centre buildings. A number of expressions of interest have been received and these will be further progressed in the coming weeks, following a decision being taken.

11.2 Engagement with organisations within the voluntary, community and faith sector has taken place and this work will continue to ensure that, where applicable, the sector is fully engaged and able to provide those services should a future commissioning need present.

## **12.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

12.1 The children's centre budget in 2015 -16 is £3,080,000 which includes a savings target of £1.5 million. There has been a delay in implementing this proposal in 2015 - 16, but once implemented this will be a significant and challenging reduction in funding, which will reduce council run early years and children centre provision. However, it is critical that commissioning to ensure all children have the best start in life evidenced through them being ready for school takes account of all available resources within Wirral focussed on meeting the needs of the youngest children and their families.

12.2 Whilst the funding is reduced, the revised funding model will bring parity to resource allocation to ensure that the ambition of the service can be realised within the available resource and ensure that those most in need of services receive them, in a timely and effective way.

12.3 There are currently 97 full time equivalent posts across the service; the revised model will have a direct impact on staff currently within those posts. The staffing structure to be determined from the outcome of this report will principally be aligned on the basis of need and will follow due process through full HR consultation with staff and trade unions.

12.4 The above numbers do not include caretaking and cleaning staff, for those children's centres directly delivered by the Council. This will be given careful consideration. The requirement for caretaking and cleaning staff will be determined following the agreement of the revised delivery model and future usage of buildings. Consultation will be undertaken as appropriate with the individuals concerned and or their respective employing organisation.

- 12.5 The 16 designated children's centres are currently utilising 18 buildings for children's centre delivery across the four constituency areas. 6 buildings are located in the Birkenhead area, 3 are located within the Wallasey area, 3 are located within West Wirral and 4 are located within South Wirral. 2 of the designated children's centres operate from within the remit of 2 nursery schools; this report makes no recommendations about the status of nursery school provision or nursery school buildings.
- 12.6 The report advises that direct use will be made of 9 buildings as main hubs and satellites. 2 nursery schools will continue to operate as such and consideration of the use of the 7 remaining buildings will take place through transitional discussions with partners, including those who have expressed an interest in delivering services from these locations, through the consultation or via the corporate asset management team.
- 11.7 There will be slippage in the delivery of the £1.5m savings package during 2015 - 16. This will result in a shortfall in year of up to £1.2m. This position will be kept under close review. It is unlikely that plans will be implemented before February 2016.

### **13.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 With regard to the Authority's statutory duties in relation to children's centre provision and in particular when changes to provision are proposed, reference must be made to the Childcare Act 2006 (and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009 which inserted new provisions into the Childcare Act 2006), which states:
- The statutory duty to provide sufficient children's centres to continue to meet local need in respect of the needs of parents, prospective parents and young children in the authority's area.
  - The statutory duty to consult those who may be affected by any proposed changes before making any significant changes to the range and nature of services provided through children's centres.
- 13.2 These duties have been given due consideration both during the process of the consultation and in the proposals set out in this report.
- 13.3 Recent case law has made it clear that any consultation undertaken must be meaningful, informed and reasonable. Failure to ensure this could lead to legal challenge and any decision taken which takes into account the consultation could be undermined and open to challenge by way of Judicial Review. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 came into force in April 2009 and introduced a duty for local authorities to involve, inform and consult with their communities. The duty is wide-ranging and applies to the delivery of services, policy and decision making and means the Council must consult relevant individuals, groups, businesses, organisations and other stakeholders that the Authority considers likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, their actions and functions.

### **14.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

Yes and impact review can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-april-2014/eias-families-wellbeing>

## **15.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 The potential changed use of buildings across the borough could bring benefits in terms of carbon reductions.

## **16.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 None as a direct result of this report.

## **17.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

17.1 That Cabinet notes the consultation process detailed within this report, and thanks Wirral residents, staff and other stakeholders for their input.

17.2 That Cabinet notes the detailed consultation findings provided within this report and associated Appendix 1.

17.3 That Cabinet approves the revised delivery model outlined in this report and agrees to its implementation, including: taking the required steps to make the necessary workforce changes and redefining the use of assets.

## **18.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

18.1 The recommendations coming from the review process outline a new model for delivery that:

- Meets the agreed savings target of £1.5 million
- Ensures that the Council and its partners maximise the available resource for the Boroughs youngest children and their families, and that all partners including those with statutory responsibilities, work together to jointly commission and design services in pursuit of the very best possible outcomes.
- Ensures that the Council meets its statutory obligation to deliver sufficient early childhood provision as set out in the Childcare Act 2006 (and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009 which inserted new provisions into the Childcare Act 2006).
- Ensures sufficient children's centre coverage across the Borough.
- Ensures that every child continues to have a named children's centre
- Aligns the Council's commitment to early help at the earliest stages of life as a preventative strategy

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**APPENDICES:**

**Appendix 1: Consultation Feedback**

**Appendix 2: Map of Revised Hubs and Satellite Children's Centres**

**Appendix 3: Explanation of the terms used to support the review / report.**

**Appendix 4: Indicative Model of Funding Allocations**

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Early Years and Children's Centre Review</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> September, 2014</b>

### CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents Cabinet with the feedback received through the extensive, inclusive and comprehensive consultation exercise undertaken in regard to the redesign of Early Years' services within Wirral.
- 1.2 This feedback has been analysed on an ongoing basis throughout the consultation process. The feedback has further been used to inform and redevelop the original proposal for how the service would be delivered in the future, with a re-worked proposal provided to Cabinet within the substantive report.

#### 2.0 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Extensive consultation with all stakeholders was undertaken from 16 February to 27 March 2015. In summary, stakeholders were able to feed into the process through the following methods:
- Meetings: a programme of 29 open consultation events plus four structured stakeholder events were held throughout the borough. These meetings were held during afternoons, evenings and weekends to ensure the highest level of accessibility.
  - Online: the proposals and feedback channels were available on the Council website, promoted prominently from the home page, throughout the consultation process. Emails were also sent direct to children centre stakeholders.
  - Questionnaires: paper copies of consultation questionnaires and a report explaining the proposals were distributed through all children centres across Wirral, where they were promoted to people using the services. Support was offered to complete the forms where necessary.
- 2.2 The local and regional media also promoted the consultation. This promotion was supplemented through consistent advertising across the Council's network of LCD screens at 31 locations throughout Wirral. In addition information was promoted in other prominent community buildings such as GP surgeries, libraries and local shops.
- 2.3 This engagement activity resulted in 934 consultation questionnaires being received, in addition to participation from over three hundred service users,

residents and other stakeholders attending and contributing to consultation events.

### 3.0 RESPONSE ANALYSIS

3.1 Of the 934 consultation responses, 88.16% (648) were from female stakeholders and 10.07% from male. 68.85% (495) of the responses were from people aged 25-44 and 15.99% (115) were from people aged 45-64. The consultation questionnaire further asked people to indicate their relationship to the service. The chart below provides the data associated with this question, and demonstrates that the majority of responses (60.4%) came from parents or carers of children under 5.

Relationship to the Service	Per Cent	Count
I am a parent/carer of children aged under 5	60.4%	541
I will be a parent soon	3.7%	33
I am a provider with education and caring responsibilities for children under 5	3.9%	35
I am a child minder with education and caring responsibilities for children under 5	1.2%	11
I provide out of school activities for children up to 8	0.7%	6
I am responding on behalf of a community, voluntary or faith organisation	2.2%	20
I am responding on behalf of a school	1.3%	12
I am a professional who uses Children's Centres to work with children and their families	7.7%	69
I am a volunteer at a Children's Centre	1.7%	15
I am a local resident interested in the future of Children's Centres	11.3%	101
None of these	5.9%	53

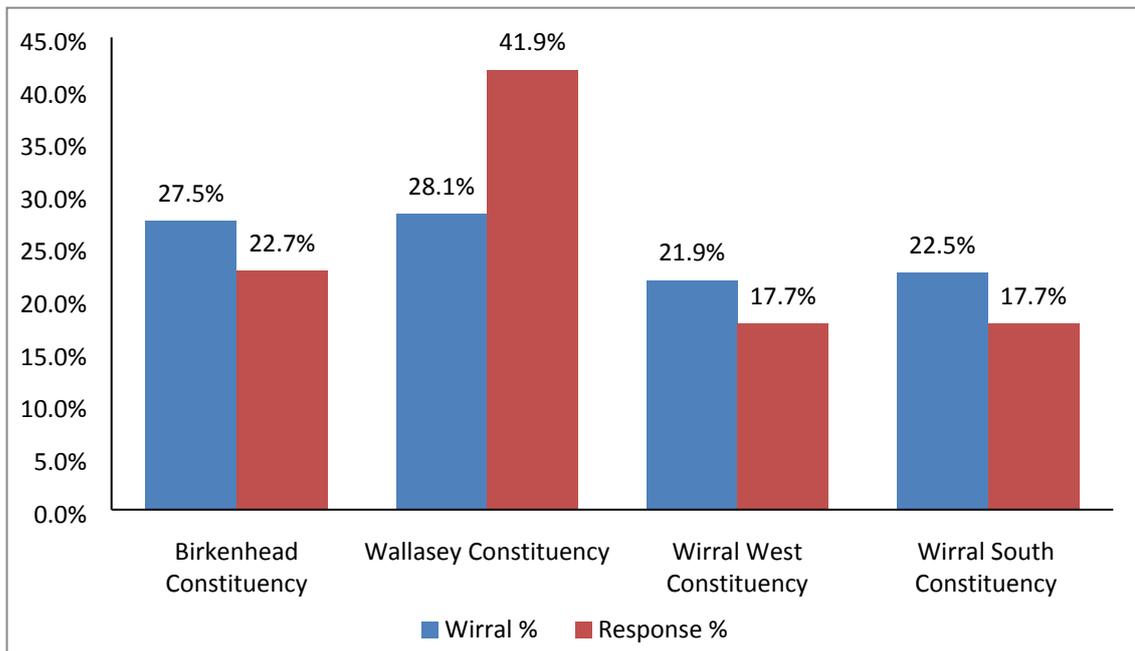
3.2 The consultation respondents were also asked to indicate how often they used children's centre services. The chart below provides this data, and demonstrates that over 70% of respondents use the services at least once a week. 12.69% of people responding never use the services involved.

How often the service is used	Per Cent	Count
Once a week	33.3%	289

Two or more times a week	39.6%	343
Once a month	6.2%	54
Less than once a month	8.2%	71
Never	12.7%	110

3.3 Geographic analysis was also performed on the consultation response levels. This analysis showed that Wallasey constituency is significantly over-represented in the sample data, demonstrated in the chart below. This has therefore skewed the percentage response figure from Birkenhead. Birkenhead is often under-represented in consultation exercises, and extra effort was taken to ensure every person with an interest in the proposals, across all constituencies, was provided with an opportunity to take part. The source of this over-representation in relation to Wallasey, is the level of response from two particular wards:

- Leasowe and Moreton East: This ward represents less than 5% of the total population of Wirral, but provides 10.9% of the consultation response data.
- Seacombe: This ward represents less than 5% of the total population of Wirral, but provides 9.8% of the consultation response data.



3.4 Within the chart above, the 'Wirral %' represents the percentage of the total Wirral population living within the constituency, with the 'Response %' representing the percentage of the consultation response coming from that constituency. It is important to note within this data that 177 responses did not provide a valid or complete post code and are therefore not included within this section of the analysis.

- 3.5 The consultation questionnaire also sought to determine which children’s centres, or other venues, people accessed services from. 86% of people responding said they accessed services through a children centre, 24% through a school and 16% through a community or other outreach centre. People were able to select more than one option, which is why the percentage figures quoted do not total 100%. When people were asked to name the centre they used most often a wide variety of centres and locations were highlighted, including: Ganneys Meadow, West Kirby, Pensby, Bromborough, Bebington, Seacombe, Brassey Gardens, Rock Ferry, New Ferry, Leasowe, New Brighton, Liscard and Greasby among others.
- 3.6 Other questions were asked to gather feedback on other demographic and ethnographic aspects of the respondents. This data demonstrated that the response sample was broadly representative of the groups currently accessing the service.

#### 4.0 FEEDBACK ON SERVICE DESIGN PROPOSALS

##### Children’s Centre buildings

- 4.1 The main element of consultation feedback centred on the initial proposal for how the service could be configured and delivered in the future. To that end, a specific question was asked within the questionnaire to determine the extent people agreed or disagreed with the overarching proposal to have one main centre and one satellite, outreach centre in each constituency. The response to that question is provided in the chart below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	29.0%	257
Agree	12.4%	110
Neither agree or disagree	6.0%	53
Disagree	11.4%	101
Strongly disagree	35.7%	316
Disagree but understand the need to do this	5.4%	48

- 4.2 A geographical analysis has been performed on the response to this question, which demonstrates that the strongest level of disagreement with the proposal comes from within the Wallasey constituency. The highest level of agreement with the proposal comes from respondents living within Birkenhead. The chart below provides this analysis in full.

Constituency	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Birkenhead	37%	17%	2%	14%	25%
Wallasey	26%	8%	5%	13%	41%
Wirral West	26%	11%	8%	10%	39%
Wirral South	25%	18%	8%	10%	34%
No Post Code Data	32%	12%	9%	9%	35%

- 4.3 Further data was gathered to determine views on the proposed locations of both the 'hubs' and the satellite centres within each constituency. This data is provided below.

**Location of Hubs (proposed as Eastham, Pensby & Thingwall, Seacombe and Brassey Gardens).**

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	14.3%	114
Agree	13.1%	105
Neither agree or disagree	13.5%	108
Disagree	16.8%	134
Strongly disagree	37.3%	298
Disagree but understand the need to do this	5.0%	40

Once again, when this data is analysed on a geographical basis it is clear that, while there is a general trend of disagreement across all areas, respondents living in wards within the Wallasey constituency are more strongly opposed to the proposed locations of the 'hub' centres.

Constituency Areas	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Birkenhead	18%	14%	18%	23%	26%
Wallasey	15%	14%	9%	15%	47%
Wirral West	16%	6%	17%	23%	39%
Wirral South	7%	20%	17%	15%	40%
No Post Code Data	18%	14%	16%	16%	37%

**Location of Satellite Centres (proposed as New Ferry, West Kirby, New Brighton and Birkenhead & Tranmere).**

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	9.9%	79
Agree	14.9%	118
Neither agree or disagree	22.0%	175
Disagree	16.5%	131
Strongly disagree	32.5%	258
Disagree but understand the need to do this	4.2%	33

Geographic analysis of this question demonstrates broadly that responses from all constituency areas hold similar opinions on the proposed location of the satellite centres, but with respondents from the Wallasey constituency again being more strongly opposed.

Constituency Areas	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Birkenhead	12%	17%	26%	25%	18%
Wallasey	10%	14%	15%	12%	44%
Wirral West	6%	14%	25%	17%	31%
Wirral South	6%	17%	27%	16%	30%
No Post Code Data	13%	14%	24%	16%	28%

**Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:**

The consultation generated a significant amount of positive feedback concerning people's experience of the service indicating how highly the service, and in particular the colleagues delivering it, are valued by the families, parents and carers of young people. Many comments related to the need to balance the service provision offered between outreach and buildings.

A key theme emerging from the consultation feedback was that people did not necessarily disagree in principle with the proposal to develop a service based on hubs, satellite centres and outreach, but rather the overriding concern was avoiding the outright closure of centres.

Some key themes which emerged in relation to the proposed location of hub and satellite centres include:

- Respondents strongly felt that locations of centres should be determined by need, not necessarily purely by geography.
- There were concerns raised about the potential for the reconfigured service to be able to accommodate the demand through the new model.
- The main concerns expressed were about the lack of easy access to a centre and the distance that may have to be travelled to get access to a service from a hub or satellite. For some, the potential added cost of transport was highlighted as a concern.
- It was felt that attention should be given to ‘rebranding’, ensuring that centres are welcoming and give clear information about what happens there in relation to direct delivery and access to other services or signposting.
- Geographical analysis showed that the strongest level of disagreement came from the Wallasey constituency area (41%) closely followed by the West Wirral area (39%) where responses indicated that centres remain unchanged.
- From an analysis of the comments received through the feedback forms and notes of meetings, the level of disagreement was in relation to peoples/ users preferred centres to remain as they were currently with no change.
- Concerns raised through comments within the consultation feedback focussed on a perceived closure of centres. In particular, a considerable number of concerns came from parents, service users and stakeholders concerned about the reduced provision from the two nursery schools currently commissioned to deliver children’s centre provision (Leasowe and Ganney’s Meadow) and from centres within West Wirral.
- Within South Wirral 40% disagreed with the named hub at Eastham with feedback from group events consistently indicating that Bromborough should be considered

## **5.0 FEEDBACK ON SERVICE POLICY PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 In addition to the specific, detailed proposals on the design and configuration of the service, stakeholders were also asked to provide feedback on a series of proposals related to the future development of the service.

### Integration and Collaboration

- 5.2 Initially, people were asked to indicate their views on developing more integrated arrangements with other services and organisations that provide services for children and their families. The response to that question is

provided below and demonstrates that a majority of people responding (over 60%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal develop more integrated arrangements with other services and organisations that provide services for children and their families.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Per Cent</b>	<b>Count</b>
Strongly agree	31.3%	245
Agree	31.6%	248
Neither agree or disagree	12.0%	94
Disagree	7.3%	57
Strongly disagree	16.2%	127
Disagree but understand the need to do this	1.7%	13

**Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:**

There was general agreement with this proposal from the consultation feedback. Many of the comments received in this area focussed on how important it is for parents and young children that the Council is joined up with health and other partners and can provide an efficient service.

Some concerns were raised, which can be summarised as follows:

- There was recognition of the need to avoid duplication built on a shared vision and outcomes
- The Council should not expect other organisations to deliver on its behalf, but seek to develop partnerships that work and deliver the best outcomes for families.
- Relationships should be built up and strengthened with areas such as health, social care, Job Centre Plus, midwifery, maternity, social landlords and others.
- The Council should seek to gather best practice from other areas to further improve the service offer and model.
- The service objective and purpose should be clear and effectively communicated and promoted to partners, staff and users through a marketing and communications strategy.
- Processes should be improved to strengthen the role of Advisory Boards in the centres, to enable more robust challenge and direction of the centres performance.
- Key opportunities for closer joint working with health and early years partners were identified through initiatives such as the 2 year old integrated review. This would be rolled out across all areas and will identify the children most in need of support

- Working alongside community partners in the voluntary sector and using community development approaches was seen as essential in reshaping children’s centres role in communities.

Outreach Model

5.3 People were further asked to indicate their views on whether they agreed with the proposal for staff to work as an outreach team across a constituency area to respond to need. This proposal would mean that services would be delivered where they were needed in the community. The response to that question is provided below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
Strongly agree	23.7%	187
Agree	22.4%	177
Neither agree or disagree	16.1%	127
Disagree	13.8%	109
Strongly disagree	20.5%	162
Disagree but understand the need to do this	3.4%	27

46.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the proposal for staff to work as an outreach team across a constituency area with 30% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

**Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:**

Once again, a significant theme of feedback in this area focussed on how highly regarded Children’s Centre staff are by the families accessing the service. There were a whole range of comments received in this area, some of which expressed support for the proposal and some which put forward concerns. The feedback received can be summarised as follows:

- People supporting the outreach model stated that if services were brought out into the community then people would not have far to travel to access groups, services and other support. They also believed that an outreach model would likely be more responsive to the needs of individual communities than a purely building based model and that buildings could be used differently.
- People were concerned however at the impact an increased focus on outreach would have on the availability of services, and staff resources, at the centre buildings themselves.

- Comments from the stakeholder events also identified that an outreach approach as essential to ensure that services were delivered where needed in the community
- Staff must be well trained, flexible and responsive to needs, offering support and access to resources appropriately.
- Centre staff were recognised as having a good level of expertise that supported parents in a range of ways and that support is not consistently available through other provision. eg childcare.
- Good relationships were seen as important and integral to parents and children trusting centre staff.
- Concerns around the outreach model centred on the continuity of staff running groups and staff's knowledge of individual parents and children's needs. Quality of delivery could also be an issue if there was not consistency of staff to run groups.
- Volunteering at a community level was highlighted as a potentially important way to enhance universal provision effectively and was considered as less stigmatising for families.

#### Targeting the Offer

- 5.4 Finally, people were asked their views on the proposal that Children's Centres should play a key role in providing targeted early help to those families that need it most. The response to that question is provided below.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Per Cent</b>	<b>Count</b>
Strongly agree	45.7%	360
Agree	22.9%	180
Neither agree or disagree	12.6%	99
Disagree	5.1%	40
Strongly disagree	11.7%	92
Disagree but understand the need to do this	2.0%	16

#### **Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:**

In this area, comments and other feedback received was generally extremely positive, which is further represented by the responses to the questionnaire provided above. People felt that the service offer should be targeted at those in need, but not 'stigmatised'. Other feedback received can be summarised as follows:

- The definition of 'most in need' should be made clearer and easier to understand for families and partners. People were also concerned that this

approach should not exclude any family from accessing a service, irrespective of their economic status or where they lived.

- Centres should retain a universal community focus providing access to other parents and opportunities for them and their children. There was concern that support through children’s centres would be ‘lost’ to those families not seen as being ‘in need’.
- The key role centres played in their lives toward reducing isolation, increasing parental confidence, especially through active participation in children’s centres.
- That a purely targeted approach could risk missing those families who may also need a range of support particularly those families where there are children with complex health needs, families that are socially isolated, low income families.
- Centres to be ‘rebranded’ so that they remain accessible in order to get information, access to services or be signposted to other services.
- A clear defined offer for children’s centres that clarifies services provision, including access to services delivered by partners at centres and through outreach.
- The importance of centres in terms of building social capital especially through opportunities for peer support and as a focal point for families with young children..

## 6.0 FEEDBACK ON THE IMPACT OF PROPOSALS

6.1 All stakeholders were asked to consider and provide their views on what they felt the impact would be on them, if the proposals were implemented. This data is provided below.

Answer Options	Per Cent	Count
No impact	18.7%	141
I will attend another Children's Centre instead	8.1%	61
I will use Children's Centre services less often	26.8%	202
I will use Children’s Centre services more often	5.3%	40
I will not use Children's Centres anymore	21.5%	162
I will attend alternative (non-Children's Centre) early year services/activities (for example attending other local groups in the community)	13.2%	100
Don't know	20.0%	151

6.2 The chart above demonstrates that while almost 20% of respondents believe they will have no impact, 26.8% state they will use the services less often. However, it is also clear from the response that over 25% (combined) of respondents believe they will either a) use the centres more often, b) attend another centre instead or c) use other early years services provided throughout the community.

**Summary of the feedback received through consultation forms, meetings and stakeholder events:**

In this area, people felt that if less centres were available on a given day then families would not be able to get the support they needed from the service, which would potentially place greater pressure on other services and agencies.

People also again expressed the view that early years children's centre services were extremely important to a community and its development. Another key theme to emerge was that while targeted, specific service provision was important other more open and general groups (such as coffee mornings) held an equally important role in providing support to young families.



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**WIRRAL COUNCIL CABINET REPORT - Early Years and Children's Centre**  
Review: Outcome of Consultation  
27<sup>th</sup> July 2015

**Brief Description of:**

**Hub and Satellite Centres – Brief Description**

Children's centre activity in Wirral will be facilitated through a model of main hub and satellite centres across each constituency area.

The designated hub centre - will ensure that appropriate early childhood services are delivered in an integrated way and are available across a geographical area (Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance, 2013). Early childhood services (section 2, Childcare Act 2006) are defined as early education and childcare, parent and family support, health services, training and employment support and information and advice services for parents and prospective parents

The Hubs will become the central administrative function for each geographical area they represent, including for Ofsted purposes and will ensure that every child will still continue to have a named children's centre and access to early childhood provision that is co-ordinated and facilitated through communities. It is expected that a Hub will be open from 8am to 6pm for 48 weeks of the year and will take on the function of a designated centre for the area as well as for Ofsted purposes.

Satellite centres will be identified as part of the formal designation of the children's centre hub and are required to provide one or more early childhood service (based on the needs of the area and priorities as determined by the local authority and through the Advisory Boards). These may include services on site, advice and assistance or support for gaining access to services elsewhere. The satellite is not required to be open all day or across 48 weeks of the year, though access will be determined according to the local delivery needs and priorities.

**Extended School/Services**

Information gleaned the DfE/Gov.uk websites regarding extended schools cited that:

There is no single model of an extended school but extended services are designed primarily to raise standards of achievement and allow children to realise their full potential in an environment where education is valued.

'An extended school maximises the curricular learning of its pupils by promoting their overall development and by ensuring that the family and community contexts within which they live are as supportive of learning as possible' (op. cit.).

The services offered by extended schools can help parents to balance work and family commitments, develop parenting skills, become involved in their child's learning and support them in their efforts, and give them a broader range of experiences and interests.

They also enable parents and the wider community to make use of the school's facilities. For example, parents could learn more about information and communications technology (ICT) or improve writing or maths skills.

Extended schools provide for a range of services or activities outside of the normal school day to help meet the needs of nursery, primary, secondary and special school children as well as their parents, families and local community. These include clubs, activities, classes and support for learning.

Evaluation of earlier projects indicated: high numbers of extended schools were targeting specific groups of pupils or families for support with extended services. Most commonly economically disadvantaged families and pupils with disabilities or SEN

Not unexpectedly, the original research found that there was little agreement on what constituted an 'extended school'. Although information available identified that the concept of an 'extended school' could include:

- Schools that are open to pupils, families and the wider community during and beyond the school day, before and after school hours, at weekends and during school holidays;
- Activities aimed particularly at vulnerable groups, in areas of deprivation and/or where services are limited;
- The promotion of community cohesion by building links between schools and the wider community;
- The provision of services to communities, contribution to neighbourhood renewal and a positive effect on educational standard;
- Some schools may also offer services to the local community, such as information about healthy eating and nutrition or advice on managing finances, amongst many others.

### Target Groups

Target groups refer to the groups and families the service identifies as having needs or circumstances that require intervention or additional support. Target groups vary according to the services identification of its community and their needs and may include:

- Children who are in the care of the Local Authority (looked after children)
- Children 'in need' or with a child protection plan Children of offenders and/or those in custody
- Children who are being cared for by members of their extended family such as a grandparent, aunt or older sibling
- Lone parents, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers
- Families identified by the local authority as 'Troubled Families' who have children under five
- Children living with domestic abuse, adult mental health issues and substance abuse
- Fathers, particularly those with any other identified need, for example, teenage fathers and those in custody
- Those with protected characteristics , as defined by the Equality Act 2010
- Families who move into and out of the area relatively quickly (transient families), such as asylum seekers, armed forces personnel and those who move into the area seeking employment or taking up seasonal work
- A Children from low income backgrounds
- Any other vulnerable groups or individual families including those young children and families identified as at risk of harm by other services – such as adult social care, schools, police, and health services

### Targeted work

Targeted work is based on the identification of needs in order to decide which early interventions will work best for local families and help ensure that families receive the services they need and that will make a difference to their lives. This can include work with families from within the groups as above and others with identified needs.

The **core purpose for children's centres** outlines the following targeted services that can make a difference for families with the greatest needs:

- i. **Parenting and family support**, including outreach work and relationship support (the quality of the relationship between parents is linked to positive parenting and

better outcomes for children). Provision of integrated support in response to identified strengths and risk factors within individual families.

ii. **Targeted evidence-based early intervention programmes** where published evaluation demonstrates that particular interventions can help families make accelerated progress in improving outcomes where they are at greatest risk of falling furthest behind.

iii. **Links with specialist services** for families where there are the most complex health or social care needs (eg disabled children, children with major health difficulties, or children likely to be “in need” or where there are safeguarding concerns).

Targeted work with families can take place in the home, centre, other buildings and settings or on a one to one basis or through group work.

### **Outreach**

Outreach working involves making contact with families in a range of environments, including within the home, to ensure that they have access to relevant (universal and targeted) services within the community to meet their needs. These can include services delivered or supported by children’s centre staff or other partners, e.g. health visitors, schools, voluntary organisations, voluntary groups run by parents or others in communities.

Outreach workers also provide a range of advice, information and support around

- finding (and, where needed, giving support to access) local groups for children and parents/carers to attend
- positive parenting and managing children’s behaviour, boundary setting, child development
- financial difficulties/worries and where to go to for support
- support around transition points i.e: birth, settling into pre-school, school
- support for parents wishing to return to education, employment or training
- working with parents/carers to manage their own well-being and to build their confidence



	West Wirral	Ganneys	Wallasey	Leasowe	South Wirral	Birkenhead	Early Years Support	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Targeted Outreach	39,760	19,880	79,519	29,820	49,700	168,979		387,657
Universal Early years Home Visiting	11,905	5,024	14,965	5,150	13,298	24,801		75,143
Early Family Intervention	24,180	12,090	48,359	24,180	24,180	120,898		253,886
Manager	25,193	5,090	25,193	8,316	16,795	33,590	50,385	164,562
Senior Family Worker	12,090	3,744	24,180	5,987	12,090	24,180		82,270
Early Years Coordinator - constituency based	41,467		41,467		41,467	82,933		207,334
Family Information Assistants - constituency	19,880		19,880		19,880	19,880		79,519
Data Officer							36,202	36,202
Childcare Sufficiency							24,180	24,180
Social Worker							36,202	36,202
<b>Total</b>	<b>174,473</b>	<b>45,827</b>	<b>253,563</b>	<b>73,453</b>	<b>177,408</b>	<b>475,261</b>	<b>146,969</b>	<b>1,346,955</b>
Costs to be allocated:								
Senior Manager								62,992
Training								20,000
Premises, Caretaking and Cleaning		39,755		39,755				662,590
Supplies & Services		5,993		9,582				216,800
Transport								31,800
Pension Deficit / Strain								363,800
Recharges								437,063
Income								(62,000)
<b>Available Budget Total</b>		<b>91,575</b>		<b>122,790</b>				<b>3,080,000</b>

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### CABINET

27 JULY 2015

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM AND A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AREA FOR BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE</b>
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE; CLAUGHTON; OXTON; AND ROCK FERRY</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR REGENERATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR PAT HACKETT - ECONOMY</b>
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>YES</b>

#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Birkenhead & Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum has applied to the Council to be formally designated as a statutory Neighbourhood Forum to enable them to prepare a statutory Neighbourhood Development Plan for a proposed Neighbourhood Area based on the Electoral Ward of Birkenhead & Tranmere, with small additional areas around the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum in Oxtan Ward; and at Holborn Square, Holt Road and Sidney Road in Rock Ferry Ward.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Area applied for, as shown on the map in Appendix 1 to this report, includes Birkenhead Town Centre, Hamilton Square and a large part of the surrounding commercial areas. The Area includes approximately 8,500 residential properties, up to 1,800 non-residential commercial and business properties and has an estimated resident population of 12,900.
- 1.3 Public consultation has taken place in accordance with the Delegated Decision published on 7 May 2015, to comply with national regulations. The application for the designation of the Neighbourhood Area must be determined within 13 weeks of the application being publicised, which in this case expires on 19 August 2015.
- 1.4 This report recommends that the application for the neighbourhood area, as applied for, is refused but that a reduced area is designated to the south and east of Borough Road, to better reflect the delineation of local communities and the character of the area.
- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Area that is recommended to be designated, as shown in Appendix 2 to this report, would still include approximately 5,160 residential properties and up to 200 non-residential properties and would have an estimated residential population of 10,200.
- 1.6 The Council cannot refuse to designate a neighbourhood planning forum that meets the minimum statutory requirements (which include a written constitution, with a purpose to promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of an area; and an open membership, with a minimum of 21 individuals who live or

work or are elected to represent the area) and the Council must designate some or all of the neighbourhood area applied for, unless they consider that the specified area is not an appropriate area to be designated as a neighbourhood area. The reasons for refusing or amending an application must be published and can be challenged in the courts.

- 1.7 Once designated, no other organisation or body may be designated for that neighbourhood area until that designation expires or is withdrawn.
- 1.8 Any future Neighbourhood Development Plan (for any area) must have regard to national policy and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained within the Council's adopted Local Plans and can only be legally made following statutory consultation, independent examination and a majority vote in a local referendum.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 and accompanying regulations, allow communities to have more control over planning and development within their area. Using these new powers, community groups can apply to the Council to be designated as a neighbourhood forum, to allow them to develop land-use planning proposals for a defined neighbourhood area, which can include the preparation of a statutory Neighbourhood Development Plan and neighbourhood development orders.
- 2.2 A previous Delegated Report (published on 7 May 2015) considered the application submitted to the Council by the Birkenhead & Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum to establish a Neighbourhood Forum and a Neighbourhood Area for Birkenhead and Tranmere. The Delegated Report concluded that the application documents complied with the relevant statutory requirements and were appropriate for publication for statutory public consultation, which took place between 20 May and 3 July 2015.
- 2.3 The Council must now complete the legal process for designation, taking into account the comments received on the applications. The application for the neighbourhood area must be determined within the 13-week deadline set out in national regulations, which expires on 19 August 2015.
- 2.4 Only areas that fall within the final designated neighbourhood area will be subject to the future proposals of the neighbourhood forum.

### *Designation of a Neighbourhood Forum*

- 2.5 The Council must have regard to the desirability of designating an organisation or body which has secured or taken reasonable steps to attempt to secure that its membership includes at least one person who lives in the area, one person who works there and one person who has been elected to represent the area; whose membership is drawn from different places in the neighbourhood area concerned and from different sections of the community in that area; and whose purpose reflects (in general terms) the character of that area. The forum is not, however, required to have a member from each membership category in order to be designated.

- 2.6 The designation of a neighbourhood forum lasts for five years, from the date of designation.
- 2.7 Only one body can be designated as a neighbourhood forum for each neighbourhood area and the Council can only withdraw the designation of a neighbourhood forum if the body no longer meets the conditions by reference to which it was designated or no longer meets any other criteria to which the authority were required to have regard in making their decision to designate.
- 2.8 If an application to designate a neighbourhood forum is refused, the Council must publish a refusal statement setting out the decision and their reasons for making that decision, which can be subject to challenge in the courts.

#### *Designation of a Neighbourhood Area*

- 2.9 The authority can refuse an application for a neighbourhood area if they consider that the specified area is not an appropriate area to be designated as a neighbourhood area but must exercise the power of designation so as to secure that some or all of the area specified in the application forms part of one or more areas designated (or to be designated) as neighbourhood areas.
- 2.10 Whenever a local planning authority exercise their powers to designate an area as a neighbourhood area, they must also consider whether they should designate the area concerned as a business area (which would allow the proposals to be tested by not one but two referendums, one for residents and an additional one for businesses operating within the area) but can only do this if they consider that the area is wholly or predominantly business in nature.
- 2.11 The Council can only amend the boundary of a neighbourhood area, after it has been designated, if the Council is responding to a new application for a neighbourhood area to be designated.
- 2.12 If an application to designate a neighbourhood area is refused (or amended), the Council must publish a decision document setting out the decision and their reasons for making that decision, which can be subject to challenge in the courts.

### **3.0 THE REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

- 3.1 The applications for Birkenhead and Tranmere have received a number of representations, which are summarised in Appendix 3 to this report.
- 3.2 This includes objections from a retail franchise; the Pyramids Shopping Centre; Wirral Chamber of Commerce; and from the Steering Group of representatives of local businesses who are currently developing separate proposals for a proposed Business Improvement District for Birkenhead Town Centre and its associated commercial areas.

### **4.0 THE PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

- 4.1 The Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) places few limitations on the remit of a neighbourhood forum, providing that it is established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental

wellbeing of the area; its membership is open to everyone who lives, works or has been elected to represent the area; and any future proposals comply with the necessary legislation.

- 4.2 The general tenor of the representations received, nevertheless, appear to indicate a general concern about the freedom and involvement of the business community, in particular, in any future planning proposals for the area.
- 4.3 Information submitted as part of the application shows that only 5 of the initial membership of 26 can currently be classified as working within the area (the proposed forum now has 34 registered members, with 5 further applications for membership under consideration).
- 4.4 In terms of representation, the Act requires only 21 members (each of whom live in or work in or are elected to represent the area) and an open membership.
- 4.5 The proposed Constitution will commit the Forum to engaging with the Council and with all statutory agencies, businesses, voluntary sector groups and community associations with an interest in the area and will require the management committee to work collaboratively with any other interested party (Sections 2(b) and 10(d) refer).
- 4.6 The proposed Constitution would also ensure that all neighbourhood plan-related consultations will seek to involve everyone who lives or works in the area and would be open to anyone who lives or works in the area, whether members of the Forum or not (Sections 10(b) and 10(c) refer).
- 4.7 Subject to recommendation (3) below, there is therefore nothing in the initial membership or in the proposed Constitution of the proposed Forum that could prevent the Council from concluding that the Forum would be an appropriate qualifying body, suitable for designation for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

## **5.0 THE PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA**

- 5.1 “An appropriate area to be designated as a neighbourhood area” is not defined in national legislation or policy. It is therefore a matter for the Council to determine what an appropriate area is, taking into account the objectives of the legislation and all the relevant specific circumstances.
- 5.2 National Planning Practice Guidance indicates that Electoral Ward boundaries can be a useful starting point and that the following could be considerations when deciding the boundaries of a neighbourhood area:
  - village or settlement boundaries, which could reflect areas of planned expansion
  - the catchment area for walking to local services such as shops, primary schools, doctors’ surgery, parks or other facilities
  - the area where formal or informal networks of community based groups operate
  - the physical appearance or characteristics of the neighbourhood, for example buildings may be of a consistent scale or style

- whether the area forms all or part of a coherent estate either for businesses or residents
  - whether the area is wholly or predominantly a business area
  - whether infrastructure or physical features define a natural boundary, for example a major road or railway line or waterway
  - the natural setting or features in an area
  - the size of the population (living and working) in the area
- 5.3 Although the current application has been based on the Electoral Ward boundary for Birkenhead and Tranmere, the boundaries to the area applied for do not fully reflect the boundaries to many of the associated local communities.
- 5.4 The application, as submitted, would for example:
- include only parts of the larger residential communities to the west of Borough Road, which are more associated with the wider community in Oxtun;
  - include only parts of the residential community around the Williamson Art Gallery (in Oxtun Ward);
  - include only parts of the communities that are within the immediate catchment of the Key Town Centre and the Traditional Suburban Centres at Grange Road West and Oxtun Road; and would
  - exclude a large part of the community, to the south and east of Mersey Park (in Rock Ferry Ward), which may, following independent examination, need to be added as part of any future referendum.
- 5.5 Of all these areas, the residential community to the south and east of Borough Road would appear to be the best defined.
- 5.6 The area applied for is also large and complex, taking in the following designations in the Unitary Development Plan:
- the Key Town Centre of Birkenhead, identified as the main sub-regional shopping centre for the Borough;
  - the Traditional Suburban Centres at Grange Road West and at Oxtun Road;
  - the Primarily Commercial Area around Hamilton Square, including Hamilton Square Conservation Area;
  - the Employment Development Site at Europa Boulevard;
  - the Primarily Industrial Areas and employment sites at Woodside; Hind Street, Priory Industrial Estate and Monks Ferry;
  - parts of the Primarily Industrial Areas at Twelve Quays and Cleveland Street, including part of the nationally designated Mersey Waterfront Enterprise Zone, to the west of Tower Road;

- part of the Primarily Residential Area to the south of Borough Road, as far south as Victoria Park, including Clifton Park Conservation Area;
  - parts of the Primarily Residential Areas to the west of Borough Road, as far as the Williamson Art Gallery;
  - the smaller Primarily Residential Areas at Church Street and Priory Wharf and at Brook Street East; and
  - parts of the Primarily Residential Areas to the north and west of the Town Centre and Europa Boulevard, between the town centre and Birkenhead Park.
- 5.7 Parts of these areas are also subject to existing regeneration programmes, which have already been the subject of public involvement.
- 5.8 Although the initial membership of the proposed Forum meets the minimum statutory requirements, the information provided in the application shows that the Forum does not yet have a representative from each of these many areas and that most of the initial members are from within the residential area to the south and east of Borough Road.
- 5.9 The area applied for also straddles the boundary between two of the Settlement Areas identified in the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan, which separate the main commercial areas in Settlement Area 2 - Commercial Core from the surrounding residential areas in Settlement Area 3 - Suburban Birkenhead.
- 5.10 Draft Core Strategy Policy CS5 sets out the Council's vision and strategic priorities for the Commercial Core of Birkenhead (the commercial areas including Cleveland Street, Twelve Quays, Woodside, Hamilton Square, Birkenhead Town Centre, Europa Boulevard, Hind Street, Monks Ferry and Cammell Lairds), including establishing a new city neighbourhood at Wirral Waters; safeguarding and enhancing the vitality and viability of Birkenhead Town Centre as the Borough's principal focus for retail, office and town centre uses; and promoting the physical enhancement and economic regeneration of the surrounding commercial hinterlands. Initial modifications also refer to a mixed use development at Woodside.
- 5.11 Draft Core Strategy Policy CS6 sets out the vision and strategic priorities for Suburban Birkenhead (the residential areas to the south and west of the main commercial areas, to the east of the M53 Motorway), including providing attractive residential areas, with good access to Birkenhead, Liverpool and the M53 Motorway; supporting market renewal to reduce the number of vacant properties and previously developed sites in Birkenhead and Tranmere; and supporting integration with the new city neighbourhood at Wirral Waters, while maintaining a clear interface between the residential suburbs and the commercial areas to the north and east in Settlement Area 2.
- 5.12 The Broad Spatial Strategy (Draft Core Strategy Policy CS2) also makes Wirral Waters; the Mersey Heartlands Enterprise Zone and its surrounding industrial and commercial hinterland; Birkenhead Town Centre including Hamilton Square and Woodside; and the industrial and commercial areas along the A41 Corridor in Tranmere; the primary focus for new jobs to support the economic revitalisation of the Borough.

5.13 As it is a legal requirement that any future neighbourhood planning proposal must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained within the Council's adopted Development Plan, it could be misleading and frustrating to community expectations if areas that are clearly likely to be subject to wider strategic proposals, such as Birkenhead Town Centre, which could not be influenced by the content of any future neighbourhood plan, were to be included.

5.14 The comments received also raised four further issues:

*Wirral Waters and Partnership Neighbourhoods*

5.15 The area applied for includes small parts of the area subject to the outline planning consent for Wirral Waters, related to parts of the surrounding access roads and junctions, including the public highways at Tower Road and Rendell Street.

5.16 The 'partnership neighbourhoods', which were identified as areas where closer integration would be required to support the wider strategic investment framework for Wirral Waters, were subsequently identified as Focus Areas in the Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters Strategy Report.

5.17 The area applied for would include parts of six of these separate Focus Areas and the residential areas to the south of Borough Road are identified as a separate Focus Area (South Birkenhead Residential).

*Mersey Waterfront Enterprise Zone*

5.18 Nationally designated Enterprise Zones are at the heart of the Government's long term economic plan to attract investment and support businesses to grow by offering a range of financial incentives and a simplified planning regime, to unlock key development sites, consolidate infrastructure, attract business and create jobs. Business rate discounts are currently available until March 2018 and enhanced capital allowances until March 2020. All business rates growth generated by the Enterprise Zone is to be kept by the relevant local enterprise partnership and local authorities in the areas, for 25 years, to reinvest in local economic growth.

5.19 The proposed neighbourhood area, as applied for, overlaps a small part of the boundary to the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone, in the smaller, separate, designated area to east of Tower Road at Tower Wharf. The land to the south of Tower Wharf, between Tower Wharf and Egerton Dock, is already under construction.

*Business Improvement Districts and Neighbourhood Planning*

5.20 A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined area in which a levy is charged on business ratepayers, in addition to the business rates bill, to develop projects which will benefit businesses in the local area. The establishment of a Business Improvement District is voluntary, and depends on the businesses in the proposed District voting in favour of the proposals. The BID would last for five years, after which there would need to be another ballot to determine if the BID should continue for another five year period.

- 5.21 A recent national consultation, setting out proposals to strengthen the role of BIDs, suggested that business-led neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders could offer significant benefits to areas with a concentration of businesses, such as high streets, industrial/trading estates and commercial districts and that the Government would like to make it possible for a BID body (where one exists) to apply to be designated as a neighbourhood forum without the need to meet the requirements currently set for prospective neighbourhood forums, particularly in areas where there were few residents or residents were not interested in developing a neighbourhood plan. The deadline for comments was 19 June 2015 and the Government's response is still awaited.
- 5.22 The Wirral Chamber of Commerce embarked upon the process for setting up a BID for Birkenhead in March 2014. First stage consultation was completed in May 2015 and a ballot of local businesses is planned to take place during November 2015, with a view to commencing BID activities in accordance with an approved five-year business plan, from January 2016. Further information can be viewed on the BID website at <http://www.birkenheadbid.co.uk/>
- 5.23 The majority of the initial proposed BID area, which currently includes approximately 653 eligible business ratepayers and an estimated resident population of about 2,300 people, is included in the area now being applied for by the Neighbourhood Planning Forum.
- 5.24 Although the BID has not yet been finally confirmed, it would appear that the sponsors of the BID, if successful, may wish to reserve the right to apply for neighbourhood planning powers, were those powers to become available in future.

#### Heritage Issues

- 5.25 Hamilton Square Conservation Area contains the largest Grade 1 Listed Victorian square outside London and has major significance for the historical development of Wirral.
- 5.26 Although Historic England has indicated that it will be important to ensure that any future strategy for Birkenhead and Tranmere safeguards the significance of any heritage assets, they have not objected to the principle of including Hamilton Square Conservation Area within the boundary of the Neighbourhood Area.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 On the basis of the previous analysis and the comments received, it is therefore recommended that only the area to the south and east of Borough Road, shown on the plan in Appendix 2, is designated, to more appropriately reflect the delineation of local communities and the character of the area.
- 6.2 As this area would be primarily residential in character, it would not be appropriate to designate it as a business area.
- 6.3 The Forum which has currently applied for designation would only be invited to represent this smaller primarily residential area.

6.4 The reasons for refusing the application for the area applied for shown in Appendix 1 are:

1. The area applied for is too large and diverse, including a number of different communities and communities of interest;
2. The boundary applied for does not properly reflect the boundaries and character of these different communities;
3. The area applied for includes areas of strategic importance to the Borough, which are subject to a far wider community of interest, which is subject to strategic policies in the Council's emerging Local Plan;
4. There are other mechanisms for appropriate public involvement in setting the strategic priorities in these areas;
5. Objections have been received from business interests that are likely to be affected by the designation;
6. Proposals are being prepared for a Business Improvement District, which may be better able to represent the business community within the predominantly commercial part of the area applied for, to the north of Borough Road;
7. The Business Improvement District should also not be included, because it includes areas of strategic importance, including Birkenhead Town Centre, Hamilton Square and Woodside;
8. The Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone should not be included, as it is subject to national designation and controls;
9. Land within the existing planning permission for Wirral Waters should not be included, as it has already been the subject of detailed consideration;
10. Land at the entrance to the Birkenhead Road Tunnel should not be included, because of its strategic importance for the transport network;
11. The predominantly residential areas to the west of Borough Road should not be included because they are part of communities more associated with Oxton to the west;
12. The industrial areas at Hind Street, to the east of Argyle Street South and to the north of Hinderton Road and Helmingham Grove, should not be included because they are also part of the wider commercial area which is subject to strategic policies in the Council's emerging Local Plan; and
13. The Council's emerging Core Strategy Local Plan seeks to maintain a clear interface between the residential suburbs and the commercial areas to the north and east.

6.5 The reasons for designating the reduced area shown in Appendix 2 are:

1. The membership of the proposed forum, as currently constituted, seems better able to represent the area to the south and east of Borough Road;
2. The predominantly residential area to the south and east of the main route of Borough Road appears to be a well-defined community of interest;
3. The designation of the revised area would concentrate the activities of the Forum on a smaller, more manageable area;
4. The designation of the revised area would enable activity and resources to be focused on the needs of the local community that can best be influenced by the content of a neighbourhood plan; and

5. The designation of the revised area will not prevent additional neighbourhood forums from being designated, that may be more representative of each individual area, in areas that have not been included in the current designation.

6.6 Designating a reduced area will also have implications for the membership and constitution of the Forum, as applied for, as some members by virtue of their living or working address would no longer qualify for membership and the Constitution would need to be amended to apply only to the reduced neighbourhood area.

6.7 The Forum would need to revise its application, to demonstrate that it could still continue to meet the conditions of designation with regard to the number of eligible members and to confirm that it is still willing to apply to represent the smaller area to the south of Borough Road, before any formal designation could be confirmed.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 As compliance with the national neighbourhood planning regulations is not discretionary, the principal risks to the Council are legal and financial, dependent on the continued availability of Government grants.

7.2 A decision not to designate the Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum and the Neighbourhood Area, as applied for, could be subject to legal challenge.

7.3 Potentially abortive costs at independent examination and local referendum could be mitigated by working in partnership with any future Forum, to maximise the potential success of their neighbourhood planning proposals.

7.4 There is a risk that the proposals to be contained within the proposed neighbourhood area, particularly with regard to Mersey Park, could require a wider community of interest to be included in any future local referendum.

7.5 There is also a risk that designating a wider area, involving strategic sites which will have a wider than local impact, such as Birkenhead Town Centre, could lead an examiner to recommend that any local referendum should be extended to cover a larger part of the Borough, leading to additional costs, particularly at local referendum.

## **8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 The main alternatives are to designate the area applied for in its entirety or to designate one or more smaller areas, with a different boundary, both of which have been discounted for the reasons set out within the main body of this report.

8.2 There is potential for proposals equivalent to proposals prepared by the local community to be included as part of one of the Council's own statutory Local Plans but no statutory Local Plan at this level of detail is currently being prepared and the preparation of proposals at an equivalent level of detail for each individual area of the Borough would be financially and procedurally prohibitive.

8.3 The potential availability of alternative planning powers will be a matter to be considered by the proposed forum in consultation with the Council as their neighbourhood planning proposals are prepared.

## **9.0 CONSULTATION**

9.1 The application for designation, including the proposed constitution and proposed Neighbourhood Area boundary has been publicised for no less than six weeks, in accordance with national regulations.

9.2 The application documents were loaded on the Council's website on 20 May 2015 and public consultation took place between 20 May and 3 July 2015. The consultation was advertised through public notices in the local free press on 20 May, 27 May and 24 June 2015. Notification was also sent to:

- Ward Councillors for Birkenhead and Tranmere; Oxton; and Rock Ferry;
- 1,240 contacts on the Council's Local Development Framework contacts database (856 by e-mail, 384 by letter, including consultation bodies listed in Schedule 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012);
- 3,059 local businesses through the weekly broadcast issued by Business Wirral and the Wirral Chamber of Commerce on 20 May and 29 May 2015;
- 7,913 contacts from the Council's previous budget option consultations, on 20 May 2015; and
- the Member of Parliament for Birkenhead and 60 Birkenhead Constituency Area Committee contacts, on 20 May 2015; and
- a news item was also included on the Community Action Wirral website, on 20 May 2015, to reach a wider range of community groups, at <http://communityactionwirral.org.uk/have-your-say-on-new-community-led-forum/>.

9.3 Paper copies of the application documents were placed for public inspection at Birkenhead Central Library and at the North Annexe of Wallasey Town Hall.

9.4 Fourteen responses were submitted in response to this consultation, which are summarised in Appendix 3 to this report, one of which indicated that the organisation had no comment to make on the application.

9.5 Any subsequent proposals by any future designated neighbourhood forum will need to be subject to statutory public involvement, independent examination and local referendum before they can be formally approved.

## **10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

10.1 The Constitution of the proposed Birkenhead & Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum will ensure that any other willing local group or individual will also be able to contribute to the content of any emerging neighbourhood planning proposals.

## **11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

11.1 The costs associated with designation can be met from existing resources in Regeneration and Planning.

11.2 An un-ring-fenced grant of £10,000 is available to the Council from the Department of Communities and Local Government, to cover these costs, if the designation of

the neighbourhood area and the neighbourhood forum is confirmed before the end of 2015/16.

- 11.3 Future grants of up to £25,000, which are currently available to help councils with costs associated with publishing a submitted draft Neighbourhood Plan, arranging an independent examination and holding a local referendum, may not be available during 2016/17.
- 11.4 Following designation, the relevant neighbourhood planning forum will be responsible for drawing up Neighbourhood Planning proposals in line with national regulations.
- 11.5 Any additional resources to support any designated neighbourhood planning forum and the later stages of the neighbourhood planning process, including publishing a draft Plan, arranging an independent examination and holding a local referendum, will need to be met from resources held by the Strategic Director for Regeneration and the Environment, less any available grant monies.
- 11.6 Recent local experience suggests that an independent examination could cost between £10,000 and £15,000, depending on the nature of the proposals to be contained within any proposed Neighbourhood Plan.
- 11.7 A local referendum of registered electors within the area applied for is currently expected to cost up to £10,000.
- 11.8 Wirral Chamber of Commerce has already been granted £100,000 to develop the proposals for a prospective Business Improvement District in Birkenhead and the need for further financial commitments by the Council is scheduled to be reported to Cabinet on 27 July 2015.

## **12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The Council has a legal duty to support local communities in their preparation of statutory neighbourhood planning proposals and must accept and publish proposals for designation that comply with the requirements of the Localism Act.
- 12.2 The Council can only refuse to designate a forum where it does not meet the prescribed conditions of the Act and must publish the reasons for refusing any application.
- 12.3 When considering whether to designate a neighbourhood forum, the Council must have regard to the desirability of designating an organisation or body which has secured or taken reasonable steps to attempt to secure that its membership: contains at least one individual who lives in the area, one individual who works in the area and one individual who is an Elected Member for that area; is drawn from different places and from different sections of the community within the area concerned; and that the purpose of that organisation or body reflects, in general terms, the character of that area.
- 12.4 The nature or merit of any draft or initial proposals is however not a relevant consideration in the decision to designate a neighbourhood forum or a neighbourhood area.

- 12.5 The Council may only designate one organisation or body as the neighbourhood forum for each neighbourhood area and neighbourhood areas are not allowed to overlap each other. Once designated, no other organisation or body may be designated for that neighbourhood area until that designation expires or is withdrawn.
- 12.6 The Council can refuse an application to designate a neighbourhood area, if they consider that the area is not appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area but must publish a statement of the reasons for refusing any application to designate a neighbourhood area and must exercise its power of designation so as to secure that some or all of the specified area forms part of the area to be designated.
- 12.7 In areas which are wholly or predominantly business in nature, the Council must also consider whether the area should be designated as a business area, to allow an additional referendum of local businesses to be held alongside the referendum of local electors.
- 12.8 As soon as possible after designating a neighbourhood forum and a neighbourhood area the Council must publish the name of the neighbourhood forum; a copy of the written constitution of the neighbourhood forum; the name of the neighbourhood area to which the designation relates; a map which identifies the area; and contact details for at least one member of the neighbourhood forum, on their website and in such other manner as they consider is likely to bring the designation to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area.
- 12.9 Following designation, the relevant neighbourhood planning forum will be responsible for the preparation of a draft plan, in line with national regulations which provide for statutory public involvement and for submitting the draft plan to the Council for publication and examination by an independent person with appropriate qualifications and experience.
- 12.10 The Council must make a proposed neighbourhood plan part of the statutory Development Plan for Wirral, if it passes the examination and is supported by a majority of those voting in a local referendum.
- 12.11 The designation of a forum will initially last for five years. Once designated, the Council will only be able to withdraw the designation of the forum, if the forum no longer meets the statutory conditions for designation.
- 12.12 Any local referendum will need to comply with the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012 No. 2031) (as amended).
- 12.13 The proposal to give neighbourhood forums which have a neighbourhood development plan that has passed referendum, the right to begin the process to create a new town and parish council, without the requirement to submit a supporting petition, was announced in January 2015.
- 12.14 A duty to spend a proportion of any Community Infrastructure Levy receipts in neighbourhood areas with a neighbourhood plan in place, came into force in 25 April 2013.

### **13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 An updated equalities impact review can be viewed at: <http://www.bit.ly/regenEIA> (under the heading “Regeneration and Planning”)
- 13.2 It is concluded that the Constitution, object and open membership of the proposed neighbourhood planning forum could have positive equalities implications. A new equalities impact assessment will, however, need to be prepared once any final neighbourhood planning proposals have been prepared.
- 13.3 These benefits would not apply to areas falling outside any finally designated area.

### **14.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 It is a legal requirement that neighbourhood planning proposals must contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.

### **15.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 If designated, the Birkenhead & Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum would become the statutory Neighbourhood Planning Forum for their designated Neighbourhood Area, for five years from designation or until the designation is withdrawn and no other organisation or body may be designated as the Neighbourhood Forum for their designated area until the designation expires or is withdrawn.
- 15.2 Once designated, the neighbourhood planning forum will be responsible for the preparation of draft neighbourhood planning proposals in line with national regulations including national policy and will become a consultee on planning applications within their designated neighbourhood area.
- 15.3 Subject to passing independent examination and a majority vote in a local referendum, any Neighbourhood Development Plan would become part of the Council’s statutory Development Plan alongside the Unitary Development Plan, the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton and, once adopted, the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan and must be used in the determination of individual planning applications.
- 15.4 The neighbourhood planning forum must demonstrate that their final proposals will meet the basic conditions set out in national legislation. Any designated forum must have regard to national policy and guidance and their proposals must be in general conformity with the Council’s strategic land use planning policies, which include the Council’s Unitary Development Plan, the joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton and, once adopted, the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan.

### **16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the application for the neighbourhood area be refused and that the reduced area shown on the plan attached at Appendix 2 to this report is formally designated as the statutory Neighbourhood Area for Birkenhead and Tranmere; and

- (2) That a document setting out the decision to refuse the neighbourhood area application and a statement of the Council's reasons for refusal together with the Council's reasons for making the decision to designate an area smaller than was applied for are published in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy; and
- (3) That the Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum is asked to confirm that it is still willing to act in relation to the smaller area and to confirm that it is still able to meet the conditions for designation set out in Section 61F of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) before the Council agrees to formally designate it as the statutory neighbourhood planning forum for the smaller Neighbourhood Area of Birkenhead and Tranmere; and
- (4) That, subject to a positive response pursuant to recommendation (3), the application for the neighbourhood forum is reported back to Cabinet, to allow the designation of the neighbourhood forum to be confirmed.

## 16.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.1 To fulfil the Council's statutory duties for the administration of an application to establish a statutory neighbourhood planning forum and a statutory neighbourhood planning area boundary for Birkenhead and Tranmere.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Proposed Neighbourhood Area (as applied for)  
Appendix 2 – Recommended Neighbourhood Area for Designation  
Appendix 3 – Summary of Representations Received

A copy of the application documents, including a copy of the proposed Constitution for the Forum, can be viewed at: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning>

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

[Localism Act 2011](#) (Part 6, Chapter 3 and Schedules 9 to 12 refer)  
[The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012 \(2012, No. 637\)](#), Regulations 5 to 10 refer  
[The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2015 \(2015, No. 20\)](#), Regulation 2 refers  
[National Planning Policy Framework \(CLG, March 2012\)](#), paragraphs 183 to 185 refer  
[National Planning Practice Guidance](#) (CLG, [Neighbourhood Planning](#) pages refer)

Wirral Business Support – Birkenhead Business Improvement District Proposal ([Cabinet Report 10 April 2014, Minute 185](#)) (including a map of the proposed BID area)

Review of Business Improvement Districts – CLG Consultation (March 2015) <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-business-improvement-districts>

The Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters (June 2010) can be viewed at <http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=13990>

The Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/unitary-development-plan>

The Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy Local Plan can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/core-strategy-development-plan>

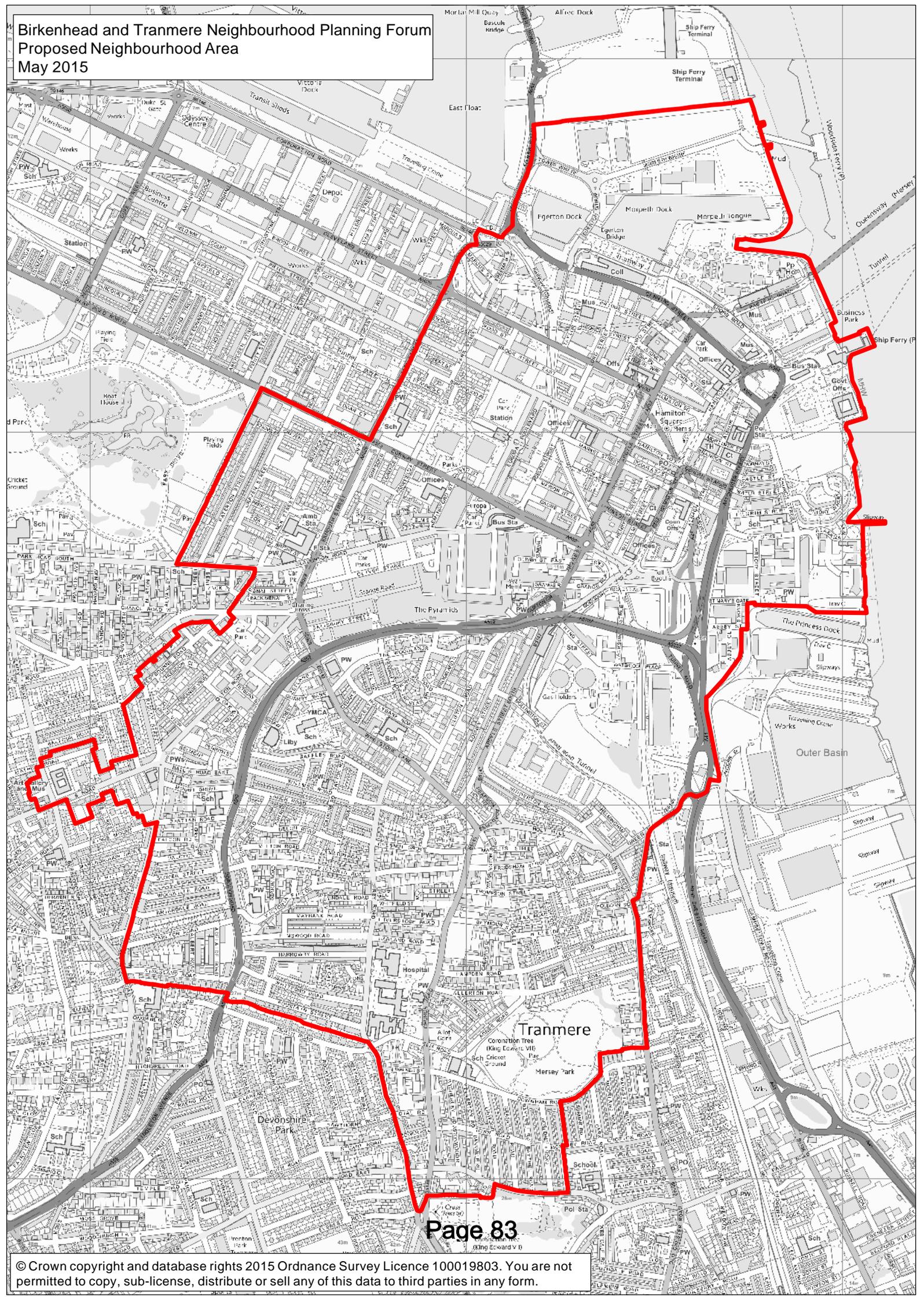
Further background information can be viewed on the Forum's website at <http://batnpf.org/>

A copy of the Council's previous Delegated Decision Report can be viewed at <http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2952>

#### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

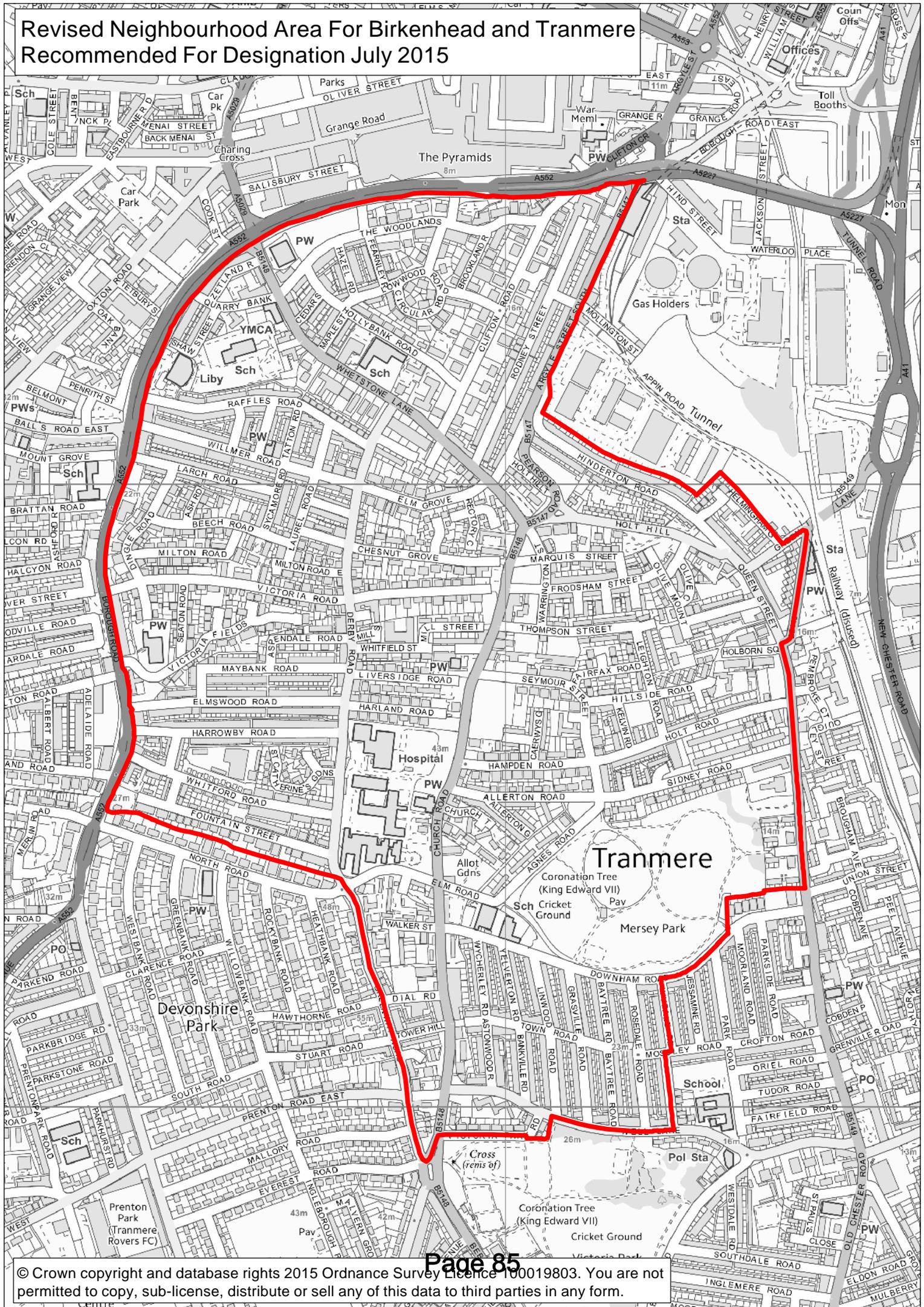
<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Delegated Decision - Application for the Designation of a Neighbourhood Planning Forum and a Neighbourhood Planning Area for Birkenhead and Tranmere (approval of statutory public consultation)	7 May 2015

Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum  
Proposed Neighbourhood Area  
May 2015



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# Revised Neighbourhood Area For Birkenhead and Tranmere Recommended For Designation July 2015



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## APPENDIX 6 – SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED

<b>The size and diversity of the area</b>	
BHT1	The proposed area is too big to be manageable. The Localism Act is only appropriate for small community areas.
BHT2	The proposed area is far too large for the proposed forum. A reduced area excluding Hamilton Square, the Town Centre and Wirral Waters would be more appropriate.
BHT5	The boundary is so large and the area so diverse, as to constitute more than a single neighbourhood.
BHT9	Welcome the proposals to involve local residents, business and other bodies in developing a neighbourhood plan, as the process will generate ideas and innovative solutions appropriate to the challenges faced by this area but the scale of the area may be too large to facilitate the degree of focus required, given the range of issues faced by a significant proportion of local residents and businesses. Securing a sufficiently representative involvement of all the different interests across this area will be very challenging.
<b>The representative nature of the forum</b>	
BHT1	Unsure of who the group are and why they feel they can represent residents, business and commuting workers in the area. The group is totally unrepresentative of the people who live and work within the area. Concern that a group of this nature can be formed without consulting local businesses and at the potential for a few local residents to have undue influence over business applications, which should be controlled by the Council.
BHT5	The Forum is not representative of the local community and will not lead to a successful neighbourhood plan. The support of the commercial director of the Grange and Pyramids Shopping Centre, included in the original application documents, is a complete fabrication.
<b>The proposed remit of the forum</b>	
BHT1	The proposed remit of the Forum is too wide. Forums under the Localism Act should only focus on delivering valid local heritage projects such as the Tunnels and Williamson Art Gallery and other targeted projects that lead to community involvement, pride and well-being.
<b>The inclusion of Birkenhead Town Centre</b>	
BHT2	Birkenhead is a major Town Centre which should be excluded.
BHT3	Birkenhead Town Centre, as the Borough's main commercial, retail and district centre, is beyond the remit of such a proposal.
BHT5	It is inappropriate to include the principal commercial area of Birkenhead, which is the main commercial district of a major Sub-Regional Centre, within a neighbourhood plan.
<b>The inclusion of Wirral Waters and the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone</b>	
BHT2	The Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone should be excluded. The pro-active working between Peel Holdings and the Council should not be disturbed by a community led organisation.
BHT3	The Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone should be excluded, given the significant local, regional and national importance of Enterprise Zones.
BHT3	The partnership areas identified in the Wirral Waters planning application should also be excluded, given the significant local, regional and national importance of this proposal.

BHT4	Given the significant national importance of Enterprise Zones, the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone and its associated Partnership Areas should also be excluded.
<b>The impact on the proposed Business Improvement District for Birkenhead</b>	
BHT1 BHT2	There is potential for conflict with the Birkenhead Business Improvement District, which would also want to have an involvement in planning issues.
BHT3	Wirral Chamber of Commerce is currently working with partners, including Wirral Council and representatives of Birkenhead's private and voluntary sectors, to develop a Business Improvement District for Birkenhead, which will encompass the Town Centre, Hamilton Square, Egerton Dock and the surrounding areas.
BHT4	The area covered by the proposed Business Improvement District should be excluded, as it includes assets that belong to the whole of Wirral rather than just the surrounding neighbourhoods.
BHT3 BHT4	The Government is currently consulting on giving additional powers to Business Improvement Districts, with particular reference to planning and the application, if granted, would affect the Business Improvement District's ability to use those powers.
<b>The inclusion of Hamilton Square Conservation Area</b>	
BHT2	Hamilton Square is a predominantly Grade 1 listed environment and should not be under the control of a community who may not have the necessary expertise to deal with the issues involved
BHT3	The historic area of Hamilton Square is a nationally recognised asset which should be outside the scope of any proposed neighbourhood plan.
BHT4	Hamilton Square, an area of significant historic importance, should also be excluded
<b>Other Policy Issues</b>	
BHT6	The Environment Agency has no objection in principle to the application or to the boundary proposed. The proposed boundary contains pockets of Flood Zones 2 and 3, which will need to be considered when bringing forward any specific policies or development allocations.
BHT7	The Neighbourhood Plan could result in proposals that could impact on the safety and operation of railway land and infrastructure. Rights of access, requiring unblocked access, including for emergency vehicles must be retained. Any development over or near to an operational railway tunnel is particularly sensitive and any proposal within 10m of any operational railway land will require review and approval by the Network Rail Asset Protection Team, accompanied by a risk assessment and a method statement.
BHT8	United Utilities must be consulted on any future development or policies to ensure that the necessary infrastructure can be delivered at an appropriate time as future proposals emerge.
BHT9	The conservation areas of Hamilton Square and Clifton Park do not have a Conservation Area Advisory Committee to represent their local interests. The Wirral Conservation Area Forum would like to see Conservation Area Advisory Committees for both these areas but as independent entities rather than under the umbrella of a local planning process. The Wirral Conservation Area Forum would be happy to work with the Forum and the Council to bring Conservation Area Advisory Committees for Hamilton Square and Clifton Park into being. The Wirral Conservation Area Forum are particularly concerned about the lack of a Conservation Area Advisory Committee for Hamilton Square given its national appeal as an outstanding conservation area, particularly as it is defined as at risk by Historic England.

BHT10	Natural England should be consulted on any future proposals including any Strategic Environmental Assessments, Habitats Regulations Assessments screening and Environmental Assessments. Opportunities to enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding natural and built environment should be considered and the Forum should ensure that sufficient information is provided to fully understand the nature of any negative impact on a local wildlife site, protected species or Biodiversity Action Plan species.
BHT12	Supports the principle of a statutory community-led forum to prepare a neighbourhood plan but the rights of the port will need to be preserved, to prevent the addition of another unnecessary layer of planning framework. The existing Port Master Plan should be used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan, to reflect proposals that already exist.
BHT13	It will be important to ensure that any strategy will safeguard the significance of the heritage assets within the area, to ensure that character of the area is retained. The local Historic Environment Record who can provide further details of designated heritage assets, locally important buildings and archaeological remains. Local voluntary groups such as civic societies and historical associations should be involved. A specific policy for assets at risk or in need of new uses or repair and to protect and enhance important aspects of setting should be considered.

List of respondents:

Environment Agency  
 P Griffiths  
 Historic England  
 McDonalds Franchise  
 McEwan Wallace  
 Natural England  
 Network Rail  
 Peel Ports  
 Pyramids Shopping Centre  
 Smith and Sons  
 The Office of Rail and Road  
 United Utilities  
 Wirral Chamber of Commerce  
 Wirral Conservation Area Forum

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