

CABINET

Monday, 27 March 2017

Present: Councillor P Davies (Chair) Leader of the Council
Strategic Economic Development,
Finance & Devolution

Councillors C Jones Adult Social Services
AR McLachlan Transformation, Leisure & Culture
B Mooney Environment
M Patrick Community Engagement and
Communications
S Whittingham Highways and Infrastructure
J Williamson Public Health

Apologies: Councillors G Davies Housing and Community Safety
T Smith Children and Family Services

102 URGENT BUSINESS - REPORT FOLLOWING THE EXPLOSION IN NEW FERRY ON SATURDAY, 25 MARCH 2017

Councillor Phil Davies informed the Cabinet that he had invited the Head of Community Safety and Transport Services to attend the meeting to provide the Cabinet, as a matter of urgency, with a report on the horrendous accident that had occurred in New Ferry over the weekend when there had been a dreadful explosion. He also paid tribute to the fantastic work Council staff had undertaken on a whole host of levels. There had been people working around the clock reassuring residents and helping find alternative accommodation for those people who were unable to return to their homes.

Councillor Davies also informed that there had been a fantastic team effort and he was proud of the contributions made by Council staff. People had been reassured that they were safe and were being looked after. He sent a message of 'well done!' to all concerned.

The Head of Community Safety and Transport Services, Mark Camborne provided the Cabinet with an update on the situation at New Ferry. He informed that at 9:15pm on Saturday, 25 March 2017 there had been a large explosion at 1 Boundary Road which had left two people seriously injured in hospital, whilst many other people had been treated by the emergency services for their injuries.

As a result of the explosion, a multi-agency operation had been put in place and an emergency evacuation centre had been opened at the Life Centre where a large number of people had been looked after. Local businesses had been making donations of food and drinks.

Mr Camborne informed that a police investigation was underway and was concentrating on a possible gas explosion. Thirty domestic premises were in an unfit state and could not be re-inhabited. Council officers were out in force and Gas and Electric Companies had staff on site. Mr Camborne suspected that a lot of buildings would be declared unfit for habitation and would have to be pulled down. When the cordon was reduced some people would be allowed back to their properties.

Mr Camborne reported on the next steps. New Ferry was now moving out of the emergency phase into the recovery phase. A Recovery Working Group would be established and would be led by the Assistant Director – Environmental Services, David Ball.

Councillor Janette Williamson informed that she lived in New Ferry and her home was in the initial cordon. She informed that it had been a very frightening time as the blast had been so severe. The multi-agency response had been brilliant and she could not praise the staff that had provided assistance enough. Councillor Williamson thanked everyone who had helped on behalf of herself and her neighbours.

Councillor Williams referred to the Dance Studio that had been flattened in the explosion and informed that children had been in the building just one hour before it was destroyed in the blast.

Councillor Davies informed that his thoughts were with those who had been injured in the explosion, their families and friends. He thanked the volunteers of the Life Church and thanked God that there were no fatalities. He also praised the community spirit in New Ferry which was fantastic and urged people to make donations of blankets and food.

Councillor Davies also informed that he intended to write personally to each member of staff who had helped in New Ferry after the explosion to thank them for their efforts and contributions.

Councillor Ann McLachlan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 4 – Nomination of Civic Mayor and Deputy Civic Mayor 2017/18 (Minute No. 107 refers.) by virtue of her being nominated for Civic Mayor.

Councillor Phil Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Tackling Food Poverty (Minute No. 109 refers.) by virtue of his wife being a Pharmacist.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham declared a personal interest in Agenda item No. 10 – 2017/18 Residential and Nursing Provider Fees (Minute No. 112 refers) by virtue of a family member's employment.

104 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

105 **EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

RESOLVED:

That the following Key Decisions that had been taken under delegated powers during the period 17 January to date be noted:

- **Leader of the Council: Collection Fund 2016/17
Effective from 24 January 2017 onwards.**
- **Leader of the Council: Car Parking Charges Budget Savings Options –
Traffic Regulation Orders.
Effective from 13 March 2017 onwards.**
- **Leader of the Council: Request for Financial Assistance – Business
Growth Grant Funding.
Effective from 3 March onwards.**

106 **TOURISM TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW**



Councillor Phil Davies, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Economic Development, Finance and Devolution said:

“Wirral is a fantastic place to live, and visit. Tourism is one of our fastest growing industries, with more people every year visiting Wirral and enjoying our unique coast, countryside and leisure attractions.

We have got to build on this momentum. We have a pledge to increase the value of our tourism economy to £450 million by 2020 – creating hundreds of jobs in the process – and we are well on track to achieving our goal.

I am grateful to the Members of all parties who took part in this scrutiny review and I believe the insight they have provided will prove extremely valuable as we continue our work”.

Councillor Phil Davies invited Councillor Jerry William (the Chair of the Task and Finish Scrutiny Review Panel), who was in attendance at the meeting, to introduce the report that set out the findings and recommendations of the Tourism Scrutiny Review conducted by the Task and Finish Scrutiny Review Panel, following the tourism sector update report presented by Officers to the former Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee. The purpose of the review had been to look at how the Council promoted and marketed the Borough’s tourism offer and to identify any gaps in its offer that could be exploited.

The review specifically linked to the Wirral Plan for 2020 tourism pledge, which highlighted the ambitious target.

The Cabinet noted that the review had been conducted over a number of question and answer evidence sessions with Council Officers and external stakeholders. The Panel had evaluated Wirral’s marketing activity and how it worked with the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership for support in marketing Wirral’s offer and a number of recommendations had been made as a result of the review.

Councillor Williams informed that the Panel had analysed the effect of tourism on Wirral, that Wirral had the fastest growing tourism economy in the Liverpool City Region and that there had been concerns that heritage tourism had not been promoted in an inclusive manner but this had now been addressed. He also emphasised that there was a need to develop the Wirral riverside in a similar way to that of Liverpool. There had not always been a cohesive approach. The Woodside area was now identified as a priority for re-development.

Councillor Williams also informed that the review had identified the importance of volunteers as most heritage activity was delivered by them. The Review Panel had recognised a need to understand what support e.g. training could be provided to volunteers to help ensure volunteer activity could be maintained and potentially increased. There was also potential to advise volunteers on promoting events through Wirral Council media and other media platforms.

Councillor Williams referred to the Report's recommendations and highlighted that:

- The Council should engage with relevant stakeholders to develop and deliver workshop sessions for the benefit of Wirral's volunteers.
- Culture should be integrated with tourism and leisure with growth via relevant partnership-led strategies. This will enable a more developed tourism offer.
- A strategy should be drawn up to take advantage of the return of the Giants in 2018, including the delivery of a programme of activity that will raise the profile of Wirral.

Councillor Matthew Patrick informed that a 'spotlight on' session was to be held for Members on Monday, 10 April 2017 which would provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the Wirral Together Volunteering Strategy. The Strategy recognised the vital role of residents and communities in achieving the Wirral 2020 Pledges and set out clear priorities for inspiring, encouraging and enabling volunteering to grow.

Councillor Bernie Moonie agreed that the role of volunteers was fundamental to improving and expanding Wirral Tourism and developing its culture offer.

Councillor Davies informed that the Review Panel had carried out an excellent review and Councillor Williams, as the Council's Heritage Champion, was well qualified to make recommendations. He also referred to the report's recommendations in respect of the Council's initiative to improve the offer at Birkenhead Market, a key feature in the regeneration of the town, the opportunities the return of the Giants presented to work as the Liverpool City Region on this event and to the need to improve transport across the Wirral, linked to the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy for Birkenhead and the wider Wirral.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the findings of the report be endorsed;**
- (2) all recommendations arising from the review be approved; and**
- (3) Councillor Jerry Williams be thanked for introducing the Tourism Scrutiny Review Report and his attendance at the meeting.**

Councillor Ann McLachlan left the meeting whilst the next item of business was under consideration.

107 NOMINATION OF CIVIC MAYOR AND DEPUTY CIVIC MAYOR 2017/18

The Cabinet was requested to make nominations for the roles of Civic Mayor and Deputy Civic Mayor for the Municipal Year 2017/2018, which would then be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Decision:

That the following nominations be made for the Municipal Year 2017/2018 at the Annual Meeting of the Council scheduled to be held on 15 May 2017.

- **Councillor A McLachlan for the role of Civic Mayor.**
- **Councillor Geoffrey Watt for the role of Deputy Civic Mayor.**

Councillor Ann McLachlan returned to the meeting.

108 TACKLING FUEL POVERTY



Councillor Phil Davies, Leader of Wirral Council, said:

“Fuel poverty is a growing issue throughout the UK, with people finding it more and more difficult to properly heat their homes and afford the rising costs of gas and electricity. 1 in 10 people in Wirral are in this same situation.

We must do everything in our power to support our residents to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. This report proposes we create a new energy company, which would – at no cost to the tax payer – put us in a position to sell gas and electricity to residents at a much lower rate.

I am delighted we have been able to produce such an imaginative proposal to help every resident in our borough save money on their energy bills”.

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report which informed that across the country, local authorities were taking action to improve energy security, lower energy bills and support community economies by seizing opportunities to get involved with

energy supply. By doing this they were able to provide customers with an alternative to the “Big 6” utility companies.

The Cabinet noted that as fuel poverty continued across the UK, consumers in the most need continued to be faced with a lack of choice from the energy industry. Local Authorities had been exploring various models to tackle this, from collective switching to energy efficiency measures and a number of them had already entered the energy market, mainly as either a Fully Licensed Operator, a White Label Provider or as a License Lite operator.

The Council now wanted to take action to reduce the number of people paying too much for gas and electricity. It was believed the best way to achieve this was to establish a new local energy supply service offer, which could provide competitively priced energy supplies supported by a programme of smart meter installations.

It was reported that research recently published by the Citizens Advice Bureau showed that people who had to use pre-payment meters, paid on average, an extra £226 a year on their energy bills, compared with those paying the cheapest direct debit tariff.

The Council was seeking to help address the issue of fuel poverty, as it was noted that it was an issue that affected a large number of Wirral residents (10.9%), and setting up an energy supply service would help alleviate this by enabling residents to obtain cheaper gas and electricity.

The Cabinet noted that there were three main Energy market considerations, each with differing levels of risk:

- **Fully Licensed Operator (Example: Nottingham City Council)**
The Local Authority applied to Ofgem for a license to become a gas and electricity energy supplier. It had to comply with a number of industry codes.
- **White Label Provider (Example: Liverpool City Council, Cheshire East)**
The Local Authority doesn't hold a supply license itself, but partners with an already established licensed supplier to offer gas and electricity under its own brand (e.g. Wirral Energy). The Partner will already possess an energy license together with the relevant statutory and compliance infrastructure.
- **License Lite (Example: Greater London Authority)**
The Local Authority took on the role of an electricity supplier with an existing senior energy supplier. The LA applied to Ofgem for an electricity only licence and had to comply with all aspects of the electricity licence except for compliance with industry codes.

The Cabinet was informed that this project would enable residents, who were currently less able to switch energy providers, to do so more easily, as the option proposed did not require residents to pay a switching fee. There was a key piece of work to be undertaken with landlords to encourage them to take advantage of the cheapest tariffs available.

This project would contribute economically by maximising household income for the most vulnerable and low income tenants and by supporting more households out of fuel poverty.

It was intended to provide the Cabinet with further reports as the work developed.

Councillor Bernie Mooney considered this to be a fantastic initiative and was an extension to what the Council did to look after the most vulnerable people who lived in the Borough. Councillor Stuart Whittingham drew the Cabinet's attention to the fact that an estimated 15,568 Fuel Poor Households in Wirral.

RESOLVED:

- (1) the setting up of an Energy Company as recommended be approved;**
- (2) Transformation Programme Office be requested to explore the possibility of working in partnership with other local authorities to establish an Energy Company;**
- (3) the Transformation Programme Office be authorised to assemble a project team to progress work on the establishment of an Energy Company;**
- (4) a partnership agreement (if required) in respect of the energy supply service be set up;**
- (5) Officers be requested to carry out a procurement exercise in order to find a licensed supplier; and**
- (6) the contract be awarded to the preferred supplier following the conclusion of the procurement exercise.**

Councillor Phil Davies vacated the Chair and left the meeting whilst the next item of business was under discussion.

Councillor Ann McLachlan in the Chair.



Councillor Janette Williamson – Cabinet Member - Public Health, said:

“It is important Wirral Council does everything possible to understand, scrutinise and assess the impact of contractual and funding changes on residents.

Members of all parties have delivered a detailed review of the implications, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to a very important subject for Cabinet to consider”.

Councillor Ann McLachlan introduced a report which informed that the Government had set out initial proposals for community pharmacies in 2016/17 and beyond in an open letter dated 17 December 2015 to the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) and other stakeholders. The proposals had included revised contractual and funding arrangements. A period of formal consultation ended on 24 May 2016, although confidential discussions continued beyond that date.

Following a Notice of Motion to the Council in July 2016, this issue had been referred to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration. On the advice of NHS England, it had not been practical to commence a detailed scrutiny review immediately, as the Government had not, at that time, made a formal response to the consultation nor provided detailed proposals regarding the future contractual and financial arrangements for community pharmacies.

Once the Government’s final proposals were made public in October 2016, a Scrutiny Review Panel had met in November to consider the potential impact of the changes to Wirral. The report documented the findings. On 1 February 2017, the report was approved by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and referred to the Cabinet for further consideration.

This matter affected all Wards within the Borough. It was not a key decision.

Councillor McLachlan invited Councillor Phil Gilchrist, a Member of the Scrutiny review Panel, who was in attendance at the meeting, to speak on the report.

Councillor Gilchrist reported that Pharmacies were often the first port of call for medication when people were unwell and that they were rooted and embedded within local communities. It was expected that the Pharmacy Funding Settlement would result in national spending of £2.687 billion (a 4% reduction) in 2016/17 and

£2.592 billion (a further 3.4% reduction in 2017/18). The funding changes would result in a simplification of the fees structure, including consolidation of fees into a single activity fee and phasing out of establishment fees. At the same time, the Pharmacy Access Scheme (PhAS) was being introduced to support access where pharmacies were sparsely spread and patients depended on them the most. However, key among the criteria for eligibility to the new access scheme was that a pharmacy must be more than one mile from the next nearest pharmacy. Initial indications were that, at a national level, 1356 pharmacies would receive funding from the PhAS on the basis of these criteria. However, only four of these were in Wirral. Social deprivation was not given any weight under this scheme.

Councillor Janette Williamson informed that the impact to local communities was yet to be established and the judicial reviews relating to the changes imposed on community pharmacies were underway. The outcome may not be known for some time. Wirral's community pharmacies were very much valued therefore updates on the Review Panel's recommendations would be presented to the Cabinet in due course.

Councillor Chris Jones thanked Councillor Gilchrist for the important piece of work undertaken by the Review Panel. She then drew the Cabinet's attention to the Government's campaign to reduce the pressures on GP's and Hospital's over stretched Accident and Emergency Departments, by encouraging people to visit their local pharmacies to seek advice in the first place on minor ailments and health problems.

Councillor Bernie Mooney considered that the Review Panel's work was excellent. She referred to the cross party consensus and agreement that there was on this matter and informed that the Council was at its best when Members were able to work together in this way.

Councillor McLachlan informed that it was important that the Cabinet monitored the impact of any changes, and particularly any impact on the most vulnerable in the Borough. She noted that one of the Review Panel's recommendations was that the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee should undertake a further investigation of the impact of the new contractual and funding arrangements for community pharmacies in approximately one year's time and that an update on the other recommendations from this review be incorporated. Councillor McLachlan considered that this was vital to ensure that the Council got the services needed in Wirral.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted and the recommendations of the Community Pharmacy Scrutiny Review be endorsed; and**
- (2) the Scrutiny Review Panel be thanked for its excellent and wide ranging piece of work.**

Councillor Ann McLachlan vacated the Chair.

Councillor Phil Davies returned to the meeting and the Chair.

110 **MERSEY REGION ADOPTION AGENCY (RAA)**



Councillor Tony Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services, said:

“Finding the right, most appropriate and loving adoptive parents for a child is incredibly important. Wirral is lucky to have hundreds of foster carers and prospective adopters across the borough, all doing a fantastic job in supporting vulnerable children.

The proposals in this report help us go even further, and create a regional adoption agency – allowing access to a bigger pool of adopters, quicker and more efficient processes and, crucially, a much better chance of matching a child with the perfect adoptive family”.

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report that provided the Cabinet with background information on the national drive towards the regionalisation of adoption services across England. It set out the progress of the proposal to develop a Regional Adoption Agency across the four Merseyside local authority areas of Wirral, Sefton, Liverpool and Knowsley in line with the Government’s expectations.

It was the expectation that there would be an RAA in Merseyside and across England by 2020. The report proposed a model for the Merseyside RAA and set out the benefits this would bring to children, adopters and to the local authorities involved.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the continued development of the proposed model for the Knowsley, Wirral, Sefton and Liverpool Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) including the recommendation that local authority staff members be seconded into the RAA be approved;**
- (2) the intention for the new model to move into shadow arrangements during the second quarter of 2017, with the new model becoming operative in January 2018 be noted;**

- (3) the proposal to use the name AIM (Adoption in Merseyside) as the brand name for the RAA going forward be approved; and
- (4) a further report be presented, containing a detailed business case including financial, human resources and the results of formal consultation with staff and unions, governance and customer implications for final approval, before the Regional Adoption Agency is implemented.

111 INTEGRATION OF HEALTH AND CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME



Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said:

“The people of Wirral told us that they want improved and more fully integrated services in relation to health and care.

They want to tell their story once; they want one number to call and to receive a properly co-ordinated response to their care and support needs.

To this end we are bringing together community nurses, community matrons, social workers and therapists in four areas clustered around GP practices to work as one service to support people in their local communities.

The aim is to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time, in order to ensure that our residents are able to be as independent as possible but get access to important health and care services when they need them”.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that Paddy Cleary Wirral UNISON’s Branch Secretary had asked if he could address the Cabinet on this item of business and he had given him permission.

Mr Cleary thanked the Cabinet for allowing him to speak on behalf of the members of Wirral UNISON. He made clear that it was because of the Government’s austerity measures that public services were under constant attack. The reduction in grant funding meant that UNISON would become solely reliant on the income it could generate and the subscriptions paid. However, Mr Cleary was concerned

because he perceived that the Council had not communicated or consulted with UNISON on the reports the Cabinet were considering at the meeting.

Mr Cleary informed that prior to receiving this Cabinet agenda UNISON had a workable relationship with the Council's leadership through challenging times and some resolutions had been agreed and difficult decisions had been made. UNISON had been promised that it would be consulted on alternative delivery models and future provision of services. Mr Cleary was disappointed that this now did not seem to be the case with items on the agenda for this meeting. He was disappointed that a political party that the union was affiliated to had not provided UNISON with the same opportunities it had provided to consultants and other outside agencies whose ultimate agenda was not in the best interests of UNISON members and did not put Wirral residents first. Mr Cleary informed that he found it insulting that consultants could address the Labour Group and share information whilst UNISON was prevented from doing so. He also found it insulting that managers, staff and Trade Unions were not involved in scrutiny groups.

Mr Cleary reported that UNISON was not opposed to the concept of integration but it was concerned about the terms and conditions that its members were actual transferring across to the Trust on. He informed that time and again, the union had battled to defend the terms and conditions of its members. His view was that the labour council should honour these terms that had been negotiated and fought for.

Mr Cleary also informed that UNISON was pleased that its members were transferring to the Trust would remain members of the Merseyside Pension Fund but it did have concerns about a two tiered workforce and the problems associated with that. This could create division between colleagues. The union also had major concerns about future pay rises for its members. Staff had suffered a real time pay cut since 2010, due to the Government, of up to 15% and it was vital that union members remained part of the national negotiating framework for all future pay rises. He considered that this should form part of the contract and, as the leadership was aware, UNISON had continually asked for an ethical element to be attached to any contract the Council entered into, that protected the terms and conditions of staff.

It was noted that the protection of social care professionals and ethos, integrity of the social care model and framework still gave UNISON cause for concern. UNISON had concerns about how staff would be professionally regulated, protected, valued and also represented going forward. It still believed that future meaningful consultation needed to take place on these issues and Mr Cleary requested a delay in the implementation date until satisfactory resolutions were found.

Councillor Chris Jones then introduced the report which followed an earlier Cabinet report to the meeting on 16 January 2017 (Minute No. 85 refers.). It covered two elements of health and care integration. The two elements were; the

direct delivery of social care statutory assessment and support functions and the planning, funding and commissioning arrangements for health and care.

Members noted that the Cabinet's approval was being sought for the commissioning of specific delegated functions through the formation of an integrated health and social care assessment and support planning service for older people and adults. In addition, in relation to commissioning, permission was sought to progress the development of a single commissioning organisation with the CCG. It was also sought for the commissioning of a due diligence exercise to fully understand the potential benefits and risks of pooling resources with the NHS.

The Cabinet noted that Social Care Services played an important role in enabling vulnerable people to maintain independence and keep well in Wirral. The cost of adult social care was, however, significant and it did not operate in isolation. The inter-dependency between health and care systems had become increasingly clear over recent years. Nationally, Councils were being faced with increasing demand on Social Care Services which presented as a challenge to meet within the available resources. Local Authorities and NHS providers were increasingly working to integrate Social Care and Health Services locally to provide both sustainability and a better experience for people who used those services.

The key proposal was to integrate the statutory frontline assessment and support planning processes in order to contribute to meeting the challenges of growth and demand, and provide an improved service for local residents. The integrated front line service would deliver the assessment and support planning function for older people and adults on behalf of the Council under a contractual arrangement. The proposal was that this service would be provided by the NHS Wirral Community Foundation Trust (WCFT) who provided community health services in Wirral. This would involve the transfer of social care staff to the NHS in order to provide joined up seamless health and social care delivery services for older people and adults. A separate proposal for an all age disability, and all age mental health integrated service was planned for 2018.

In addition, the further proposal was to create an integrated commissioner for health and care on Wirral. This would enable services to be commissioned through a single organisation fulfilling the statutory health and care functions of the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). It would also enable strategic outcomes to be effectively delivered through a single planning framework and structure. This single commissioner initiative would enable the health and care system to use Wirral's resources together to jointly create a sustainable health and care system. Commissioning would provide system leadership and a focus on outcomes for people alongside the accountable care delivery arrangements that were emerging for Wirral.

The report also set out key aspects of the integration programme which was focussed on improving outcomes for residents with the aim of delivering the right care in the right place at the right time.

The Cabinet noted the Key Strategic Outcomes to be delivered through this initiative which were as follows:

Wirral Plan Pledge 1: Older People Live Well

The integrated teams would provide timely local responses and personalised care, supporting people to live as independently as possible, avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital or to care homes.

Services would be commissioned across health and care to get the best outcomes for people within available resources.

Wirral Plan Pledge 6: People with disabilities live independently

The majority of people with disabilities would be supported by the Integrated Care Co-ordination Teams, with a later project to develop an Integrated All Age Disability and All Age Mental Health Service.

Wirral Plan Pledge 16: Wirral Residents live healthier lives

Services would be commissioned on a whole system basis ensuring that there was a clear link between the 2020 partnership pledges and the Healthy Wirral Programme. The Integrated Care Co-ordination Teams would continue to develop pathways and working arrangements in line with the key strategic objectives of the above programmes.

Councillor Chris Jones informed that care services were very important, the cost of adult social care was significant and the Government was under funding social care across the board. She also informed that this was one of the biggest projects the Council was under taking. Councillor Jones told Mr Cleary that she was disappointed about his comments and that the Council was doing all that it could in respect of staff pensions.

Councillor Jones thanked Council and Clinical Commissioning Group Officers for the work they had carried out to get to this point and informed that she would not be recommending a delay because it was vital that the full transfer of the relevant staff to the employment of WCFT, under TUPE arrangements was carried out on 1 June 2017.

Councillor Ann McLachlan informed that the report was in the first phase of a plan to bring budgets and staff from the Council and the WCFT together to deliver the services. She also informed that the transfer of staff and integrated service for Older People did not achieve any additional budget savings directly. Some reductions had already been applied to this area - £500k in 2016-17. In addition there was an outstanding balance of savings of £700k which was anticipated in 2017-18.

Councillor McLachlan also informed that the second phase would include the full business case being presented to the Cabinet at its meeting in September 2017. Updates would be reported to the Transformation Board. All risks would be considered and mitigated to ensure the aims of the integrated commissioning hub were achievable.

Councillor McLachlan reported that the integration project had been designed to ensure that the new delivery model ensured that people received the Right Care in the Right Place at the Right Time. It aimed to reduce the growth burden to the Council's net revenue funding based on more joined up working, managing demand and reducing the cost of care. The Council would retain robust accountability and governance arrangements through a formal contractual relationship with the WCFT. Performance would be closely monitored to ensure contract compliance and delivery of outcomes.

Councillor McLachlan informed that the project had been delayed from 1 April 2017 to 1 June 2017 so that staff pension arrangements and terms and conditions of employment could be scrutinised. The NHS Pension Scheme was not as good as the Merseyside Pension Scheme and staff would TUPE over on their current terms and conditions. The Council had principles around fairness but it was unable to guarantee what would happen in the future. It could not dictate to other organisations but it was doing its level best to ensure job protections into the future.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that he was surprised that UNISON did not feel properly engaged with this project. There were financial benefits associated with it and he asked the Cabinet to note paragraph 3.1 of the report as follows as there were benefits to integrated care, it was addressing a key issue that would improve the service:

'Delivering the Right Care in the Right Place at the Right Time: Services can be developed more effectively to meet the needs of local residents. With social care and health staff working within one organisation it is possible to streamline assessment processes, reduce duplication of multiple professional involvements, and develop a single point of access and single social care and health support planning. This first tranche of fully integrated provision covers non specialist aspects of social care provision delivered within community teams primarily for older vulnerable people.'

RESOLVED:

Integrated Care Teams

That:

- (1) the delegation of relevant assessment and support planning functions to WCFT under contract be approved;**
- (2) the full transfer of the relevant staff to the employment of WCFT, under TUPE arrangements with a transfer date of 1st June 2017 be approved;**
- (3) the associated s75v agreement, and contract value be approved;**
- (4) the arrangements for pensions be approved;**
- (5) the arrangements for corporate and back office support as detailed within the contract and specification be approved;**
- (6) the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, supported as necessary by the Director of Health and Care, the Head of Legal Services and the Head of Financial Services, be authorised to agree any final outstanding contractual matters.**

Single Integrated Commissioner for Wirral

That

- (7) the further development of a single integrated health and care commissioning organisation for Wirral to undertake statutory health and care commissioning functions of the CCG and the Local Authority be supported;**
- (8) a due diligence exercise be undertaken to explore in more detail the relative benefits and risks of fully pooling LA social care and CCG healthcare funding; and**
- (9) a further report in relation to pooled funds (post due diligence) be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting in September 2017.**



Councillor Chris Jones – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said:

“This report is proposing investment into making sure residents can access nursing and residential care of the highest quality.

Following extensive consultation with care providers, an investment of £2.9 million is being proposed, helping to ensure a responsive and sustainable market of care providers is available in Wirral to support our vulnerable residents”.

Councillor Chris Jones introduced a report that informed of the outcome of a consultation with care providers on the 2017-18 fee rates for services provided for adults by the Council.

The Cabinet noted that the Council was required to maintain and support a local market to deliver care and support. The work undertaken by officers had taken into account legal requirements and core standards of care and had provided a clear evidence base for the proposed fee increase.

The Council had a duty to commission a range of high quality, appropriate services, offering people choices. There was a duty to ensure the market was responsive and sustainable; looking after the care market as a whole and ensuring continuity of care.

The proposed fee rates took account of the recent volatility in a dynamic domiciliary care market and the recent and growing challenges identifying sufficient capacity in sectors such as residential EMI. The Cabinet noted that a further potential difficulty was that third party top up arrangements were now an established feature of the market place.

A range of provider engagement options were made available during the consultation period; including 1:1 or group sessions, dedicated e-mail correspondence and open book accounting offer.

Benchmarking exercises had been undertaken across the Northwest finance group. Consideration had been given to the benchmarking data gathered to inform fee proposal rates, a copy of which was attached in Appendix 2 of the report.

A full list of provider feedback and explanation of the consideration the department had been given to these and was attached as Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the rates and fees recommended within the report be agreed;**
- (2) the increased cost of £2.9m (note the DASS precept raise of £3.7m) be agreed;**
- (3) uplift fees to providers be approved from 1 April 2017;**
- (4) the forward work plan to work in collaboration with the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and the Supported Living Sector be approved to pilot test and phase in a sustainable new model of care;**
- (5) the forward work plan to work with partner organisations and the independent sector be approved to develop a new model of step up and step down bed base provision.**

113 **LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES - FUTURE PROVISION OF SERVICES**



Councillor Ann McLachlan, Cabinet Member – Transformation, Leisure and Culture, said:

“This work highlights the crucial role that our leisure and cultural services play in the day-to-day lives of the residents of Wirral and achieving the pledges in our Wirral 2020 Vision. Unfortunately due to pressures on funding we know that we cannot simply stand still and continue delivering services in the same way we have done in the past. This report provides an update on work undertaken to date and the next phase.

There is still a lot of work to do to fully develop a business case to determine the most appropriate delivery model, and I am committed to ensuring this moves on quickly. Ultimately we know that unless we radically reform services in ways such as this then we will be forced into damaging service cuts based on the funding we know we will have available”.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that Paddy Cleary Wirral UNISON's Branch Secretary had asked if he could address the Cabinet on this item of business and he had given him permission.

Mr Cleary informed the Cabinet that the report set the Council on the path to re-provision of the associated services. Before any challenge or alternative could be muted the ship had set sail, with a business case expected for June, which was frightening in its speed. Mr Cleary considered that it would be a mistake to not fully scrutinise, evaluate and challenge any recommendations, with input from trade unions, staff, local managers and residents in the various strands and site locations. He informed that this was a worrying time, yet again, for UNISON members and service users alike.

Mr Cleary believed that the information shared from Bates Wells Braithwaite (BWB) had been poor but, even so, they had been allowed to address the Labour Group with their preferred option. He informed that since the first time he had met with BWB, he had consistently requested that data be shared in order to scrutinise figures and allow the trade unions to give a view on any proposals, whether in their infancy or not. The leadership had been clear that UNISON would be involved and have access to the data requested.

Mr Cleary informed that UNISON was presented with a 64 page document just before it was put into the public domain and that was the first time trade union officials had seen the data and figures that had been used. There had been no sign of the shared intelligence report into libraries that had fed into this, again despite various requests and the belief that this would be ready at the end of 2016. He stated that this had been 'sold' as a standalone piece of work until BWB had come onto the scene and people could draw their own conclusions by the fact that it was not in the public domain.

Mr Cleary reported that currently, approximately £175,000 had been spent on Phase 1 and the shared intelligence report and a further £136,000 was being spent on a consultant to tell us the time on our watch! Once again it was not the first time the Council had been in this position. There have been several reports into the various strands associated within this area at significant cost to Wirral residents. He considered that the timetable was that optimistic that it seemed that it was already a done deal.

Mr Cleary had regard to the report and informed that a clear steer had been given in the executive summary - Financial aspects and access to finance set a clear agenda, but he believed there needed to be a challenge. The consistent message was about the savings that could be made via the VAT status. It was a very risky strategy, given the current Government. He asked whether the 'new' organisation automatically qualified for VAT exemption as a non-profit organisation, saving the £1m a year on VAT. He did not believe this was an automatic entitlement and he did not believe this was guaranteed.

Mr Cleary asked why HMRC had not been challenged about the VAT status of the Council's Leisure Services, like Ealing Borough Council had done to show that this exemption was possible within a public body.

Mr Cleary drew attention to the lack of access to grants and other funding streams which was mentioned in the report and asked for examples. He informed that he had asked repeatedly for them but none had been forthcoming from BWB or our officers associated with driving this initiative. The one example had been VAT and that had been challenged. Mr Cleary also informed that he had examples that had not been pursued. He asked why the Council had not tapped into the Football Association or Sports England and presented cases, for example the playing fields strategy. He also asked why the application had been 'sat on'.

Mr Cleary stated that the report informed about pricing to market and he considered that to be very important. He asked whether the Council charged the correct amount, or if it sold its self-short. He considered that there were clear examples that it did sell its self-short. Mr Cleary informed the Cabinet that he could list plenty of examples as could the staff who constantly 'hit a brick wall' with any recommendations or ideas for income generation.

Mr Cleary said that the report stated working with other agencies and partners alike, yet the chamber tweet about using pure gyms and not the Council's very own provision was baffling. The Council had invested in areas and seen the gains associated with it. Therefore, the Council should and still could, generate capital receipts and transform the whole package.

Mr Cleary informed that serious decisions needed to be made in order to utilise capital receipts in this way, given the timescale constraints from this Government, but Elected Members needed to make these rather than taking the easy option of putting these services into any form of arm's length company. Social inclusion should be a priority, priced accordingly and staffed with the dedicated provision the Council currently had. The Council really needed to keep these services in-house and utilise the expertise it had to generate income for these services and the residents of the Wirral.

Councillor Davies informed that Alan Small of the Wirral branch of Unite had asked if he could address the Cabinet on this item of business and he had given him permission.

Mr Small raised concerns about the decision taken that Cabinet meetings would be held at 10am on Mondays. He said this effected democracy as many of his members had been unable to demonstrate about what they thought of the proposals or attend the meeting, as they were at work.

Mr Small informed that he considered the report to be biased. It said that no recommendations were being made and then later in the report it recommended that the services did not stay in-house.

Mr Small also informed that he knew from experience of the Council's Leisure Centres that staff could work flexibly. The staff had taken cut after cut and the work force had been reduced. The staff was now more commercially minded and was bring in income but the income streams were not being taken on board. These income streams had doubled in the last couple of years and more investment would generate more income.

Mr Small asked the Cabinet not to waste the opportunity it had and to keep Leisure and Cultural Services in-house.

Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of the findings of a recent external review of specific services and to seek approval to develop a Full Business Case for a new service model.

The services within the scope of the review were set out in section three of the report and played a fundamental role in the delivery of a number of Pledges and a whole range of key outcomes across the breadth of the Wirral Plan, but most notably in support of the 'Leisure and Cultural Opportunities for All' Pledge that

“We will encourage more people to enjoy the wide range of leisure, cultural and sporting opportunities on offer across Wirral. We will listen to residents' ideas and requests, and by 2020, will have increased access to events and activities to all our residents, regardless of age or income”.

Councillor McLachlan informed that the report proposed to move to Phase 2 of this initiative and the Phase 1 Report to the Cabinet attached to the report focused on three models:

- In-house provision
- Charitable Trust
- Community Interest Company

Councillor McLachlan reported that it had been suggested that the in-house option would not be viable but Members had put it back in because they wanted this option examined very thoroughly. She informed that Members were working to a tight timetable because of the Government's austerity programme. Members had to move quickly but they would thoroughly examine all three options and they did want the unions to be as engaged as they could be.

Councillor McLachlan also informed that BWB was an organisation with an ethical brand. It had been selected partly because of its background of doing this type of work well. The findings of other pieces of work previously carried out had been provided for BWB and they had been told to incorporate this into the work it was undertaking. There would also be some pre-scrutiny work around the future provision of Leisure and Cultural Services and a Task and Finish Group would be established if it was considered necessary.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the findings of the 'Re-imagining Leisure and Cultural Services' report, and the services this relates to, prepared by Bates, Wells & Braithwaite (Appendix 1 of the report) be noted; and**
- (2) the Strategic Commissioner for Environment be requested to ensure these findings are given due consideration as part of the options appraisal and development of the Full Business Case for the future provision of specified services, to be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet in June 2017.**

114 **ACCESS WIRRAL: TRANSFORMING CUSTOMER SERVICES**



Councillor Matthew Patrick, Cabinet Member – Community Engagement and Communications, said:

“Contacting the Council needs to be as easy as possible – Access Wirral will do just that.

Access Wirral will deliver a quick, seamless and efficient route for residents to contact the Council. By removing the duplication of systems, it will help staff provide much needed support in the most efficient way.

By investing £1.2 million in a state-of-the-art system, we will improve our customer services enabling people to be self-sufficient by accessing services quickly, digitally and easily.

With improvements, we could drastically reduce the waiting time for low-risk claims for Housing Benefit. This would see those claims paid sooner, protecting vulnerable residents from turning to expensive pay-day lenders.

This investment allows us to make savings in the near future; once the system is embedded and working to specification, it will enable us to direct our skilled staff resources to ensure the most vulnerable residents receive appropriate support to successfully and confidently access the services they need.

Access Wirral is a major step forward in how the Council supports residents”.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that Paddy Cleary Wirral UNISON's Branch Secretary had asked if he could address the Cabinet on this item of business and he had given him permission.

Mr Cleary informed that the report was asking for approval for a £1.2m investment over and above the £860,000 already committed that would look to save £3m in two years' time. Therefore, in effect, a net saving of £940,000 unless there were add-ons or other further costs.

Mr Cleary also informed that what was not in the report was the 50% reduction in staff from 199 FTE to 100 FTE. It was unclear what the staff reduction would be in the Council's One Stop Shops provision and access points found in our libraries. In the light of this he believed that the 2020 pledge of looking after the most vulnerable in our society was brought into question.

Mr Cleary informed that as branch secretary, he was accountable to the members who had elected him. Therefore, he could not allow these proposals to go forward without challenging the reduction in staffing numbers, the potential reduction in one stop shop provision and the likely reduction in access points in Wirral libraries. The staffing reduction would affect the livelihood of staff, would have a detrimental impact on their families and could see an increase in usage of the services they currently provided. This was because the majority of the staff lived in Wirral. They would see their income reduced and they may then need to rely on benefits. This also meant less money going into the local economy. Mr Cleary told the Cabinet that as Elected Members they were accountable to these Wirral residents. He drew attention to the ethical element of a labour administration putting over 100 people out of work.

Mr Cleary informed that it was clear that no operational managers had been involved in this initiative to transform customer services so far.

Mr Cleary referred to the first line of the quote from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Communications which stated:

“Contacting the Council needs to be easy as possible, access Wirral will do just that.”

and asked for proof that this would be the case. He noted that Enfield had been used as the example that had fully implemented this software and informed that he had contacted the Branch Secretary of Enfield UNISON who had informed that the Enfield experience has seen:

- a de-skilling of the workforce;
- a reduction of staff by 40-50%;

- website and channel shift;
- creation of one big call centre;
- reduction to just 3 personal access points with ‘horrendous queues and more and more difficulty in getting appointments’;
- telephone calls could involve at times people waiting up to 40 minutes; and
- very good collection rates at Enfield had fallen since implementation of this product

Mr Cleary made the point that the report did not mention any of this.

Mr Cleary reported that Council tax collection rates remained steady at present at 95.4% and had averaged that since 2013-14. The last time there had been a system change it had resulted in a full collection point drop from the highs of 97.3% to 96.3%. It was his view that a similar reduction this time would more than wipe out any theoretical savings and actually result in a deficit.

Mr Cleary informed that he had highlighted a number of issues for concern but that he was only scratching the surface. He considered that, in the light of the emails and contacts he had from staff and managers alike, Members should be protecting the Council’s Access Points and One Stop Shops. They should:

- be looking to increase our collection rate;
- not be writing off £1.1m of debts in this area;
- make sure there are sustainable results over full financial years;
- be protecting the Council’s experienced skilled staff, only allowing volunteers to go through any natural wastage policy once clear results can be presented and not have to rely on agency staff.

Finally, Mr Cleary concluded that the Council had been in a similar position previously. It had been here before and had put the staff and public through this before. It had closed the cashiers section. Payments could not be taken in the One Stop Shops. The public are sent to the post office! Mr Cleary considered that the one bonus coming out of the report was that staff had been notified 12 months in advance. He urged the Cabinet to learn from its mistakes and not rely on officer and consultants only.

Councillor Matthew Patrick introduced a report which informed that Access Wirral was the Council’s approach to reshaping and improving customer service, making it easier, faster and more efficient to do business with the Council. The Wirral Plan 2020 recognised the need for the Council to be a modern public service. It was noted that:

“Technology continues to move at breath-taking speed... we must be – and will be – a Council which is fit for the digital world. Our services must be accessible, delivered sometimes entirely online to reduce costs and to improve speed and efficiency”.

Councillor Patrick informed that the report and the attached Full Business Case took Wirral a step forward with that intention, by automating Council Tax and Housing Benefits as much as possible, while ensuring that those who needed more focused support were able to get it. Not everyone had the ability or means to use digital services, and many of Wirral's more vulnerable residents would continue to need expert advice and support. It was believed that the Council could considerably shorten the process for low risk benefits claimants so that they could receive their housing benefit much more quickly.

The Cabinet noted that through the Access Wirral transformation project, extensive work had been undertaken during the past nine months to develop a detailed Full Business Case aimed at delivering major improvements in the council's ability to provide excellent customer services.

The Full Business Case included an analysis of strategic fit, the economic options appraisal, and the commercial viability of the proposal together with the financial case and an assessment of the Council's requirements to enable delivery.

The recommended option for approval through the report was Option B – Redesign of in-house provision, with investment to procure a state-of-the-art Customer Access System to support the effective digitalisation of services over the period of the programme at a cost of £1.2 million.

Successful implementation of the Customer Access System would enable the Council to deliver major savings in future years. In the first instance, transforming the way in which the Council dealt with Council tax and Housing Benefit would provide a return of £3 million by 2020, and it could then consider using the system to gain greater benefits once proof of concept had been demonstrated. This provided the further opportunity to target resources into providing more intensive support to those vulnerable residents who may feel 'digitally excluded' from newer technologies.

An extensive programme of user testing, staff engagement and customer outreach would take place over the course of the implementation of Access Wirral to ensure it was delivered in a fashion which responded to residents' needs.

Access Wirral was part of the overall customer experience programme under the transformation programme.

Councillor Patrick informed that this approach had been considered against the back drop of the Government's relentless austerity programme. He informed that he was grateful to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the scrutiny it had carried out and that he would be attending a meeting on Monday to provide an update.

Councillor Ann McLachlan informed that the Council had already invested £800k in Phase 1. This was the second Phase to provide digital access and there was

3m projected savings projected by year 3. This was a phased programme to deliver a better service and benefits to the people of Wirral.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the Business Case provided, including options appraisal, staff implications, consultation proposals and risk implications be noted and the recommendation that Option B be the preferred option be supported;**
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Director of Transformation to take the appropriate actions to deliver the agreed option; and**
- (3) the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee be provided with regular updates on progress.**

115 **WIRRAL PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE 2016/17 QUARTER 3**



Councillor Ann McLachlan, Cabinet Member – Transformation, Leisure and Culture, said:

“The Wirral Plan was created to change people’s lives for the better: the 20 Pledges are our contract with the people of Wirral, and we will deliver as promised. Combined, they will have a huge impact – improving the quality of live every one of our residents can enjoy.

We are now well into the delivery phase of our Plan, and we are seeing some real results – concrete evidence which demonstrates the impact we are having all across the borough. We are also clear about where our challenges still exist.

We promised Wirral residents we would be open and honest with them about our progress and this report is an important part of this process”.

Councillor Ann McLachlan introduced a report which provided a progress update on the ongoing delivery of the Wirral Plan and 20 Pledges. It focused on key activities and successes in Quarter 3 (October to December 2016) and the progress which had been made.

Councillor McLachlan informed that although most performance indicators were making good progress, the number of road traffic collisions resulting in death or serious injury being reported at this time was slightly higher than anticipated. However, it was likely that the year-end figure would have reduced bringing it in line with the hopes of the Road Safety Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

116 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act in that it contains commercially sensitive information. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

[* paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)]

117 **INTEGRATION OF HEALTH AND CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - EXEMPT APPENDICES**

RESOLVED:

That the content of the exempt appendix (reference report Agenda Item No. 9 – Minute No. 111) be noted.