



Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 24 January 2017

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

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

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

3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 22)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 29 November and 7 December, 2016.

4. NOTICE OF MOTION: INWARD INVESTMENT (Pages 23 - 24)

At the meeting of the Council held on 17 October 2016 (minute 67 (3) refers), the attached Notice of Motion, 'Inward Investment' proposed by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan was referred by the Mayor to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The matter was deferred at the November meeting of this Committee (minute 35 refers – 29/11/16) to this meeting.

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (6), Councillor Davies has been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to be given an opportunity to explain the Motion.

5. BUDGET PROPOSALS WORKSHOP REPORT

Report to follow.

In connection with this item a presentation from officers will be made to the Committee on proposals regarding car parking.

**6. THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS IN WIRRAL'S ASSET STRATEGY
(Pages 25 - 38)**

7. TOURISM TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW (Pages 39 - 62)

**8. UPDATE ON LIVERPOOL CITY REGION DEVELOPMENTS
(Pages 63 - 66)**

**9. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY SCRUTINY
PANEL - VERBAL UPDATE**

10. POLICY INFORM: BUSINESS (Pages 67 - 102)

11. HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATION PANEL MINUTES

The minutes of the Highways and Traffic Representation Panel meeting due to be held on 17 January, 2017 will be circulated in an agenda supplement.

**12. BUSINESS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME (Pages 103 - 108)**

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

**14. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE
PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The public may be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

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

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

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BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 29 November 2016

Present:

Councillor M Sullivan (Chair)

Councillors	C Spriggs	W Ward
	RL Abbey	C Blakeley
	J McManus	G Ellis
	J Stapleton	J Hale
	KJ Williams	T Pilgrim
	S Williams	D Mitchell

In attendance:

Councillors P Brightmore (In place of A Leech)
C Muspratt (In place of D Realey)

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that no further apologies had been received other than for Councillors Anita Leech and Denise Realey who both had deputies standing in for them.

32 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

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

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

Councillor Jean Stapleton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6, 'Notice of Motion: Treating all Residents Fairly and Equitably', by virtue of her membership of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

33 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 September, 2016.

Resolved –That the minutes of the meeting of 13 September, 2016 be approved.

NOTICE OF MOTION: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Assistant Director: Law and Governance reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 17 October, 2016 (minute 67 (5) refers), the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist and seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly was referred by the Mayor to this Committee for consideration –

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

“Council notes:

1. the training session on the arrangements for Performance Management held on 7 September 2016, attended by a wide range of Members across all parties, at which Members were informed regarding the range of indicators chosen for future reports based on the progress with the Wirral Plan;
2. the concern expressed at that meeting that these reports and proposed indicators do not cover the range of established indicators that Council Members have always followed and expected to see, such as progress with staff appraisals, the level of staff sickness and absence and other issues;
3. that many Members at the training session made the case for a wider range of indicators to show how Council services are performing;
4. that the former Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee received performance monitoring data on a range of indicators that are and remain sensitive and significant in the light of OFSTED’s recent findings.

Council, therefore, requests that:

- (i). as the data is still being collected and analysed by officers, a set of such wider indicators should be presented to Members on a regular basis;
- (ii). accompanying quarterly performance data, there should also be information as to the target expected in that quarter, in addition to the year end and Plan end (2020) target;
- (iii). the choice of indicators needs to be relevant to the 2020 pledge and undertakes to review those indicators chosen to measure pledge success prior to reporting for Quarter 2 performance;

- (iv). officers report to each Overview and Scrutiny committee the 'added value' expected for those indicators that have been included within the 2020 Vision Plan and, in respect of indicators flagged as under or over performing, additional information and actions proposed in respect of those indicators.

In order to secure a transparent and open review, Members should be invited to submit details of the key areas that they wish to see reported upon by the end of October.

The Spokespersons of each of the newly created Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be requested to examine these suggestions and ensure a sufficient, timely and readily accessible mechanism for such data in future reports."

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (6), Councillor Gilchrist had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to be given an opportunity to explain the Motion.

Councillor Gilchrist elaborated on the motion which had also been referred to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had met the previous evening and was going to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following evening. He was aware that the Chairs and spokespersons had met to discuss the matter. He suggested the need to find indicators which remained relevant, were accurate and could be easily assessed.

The Chair commented that the Committee would all echo the sentiments being expressed and on a motion by the Chair, duly seconded, it was –

Resolved –

(1) That the Notice of Motion be supported.

(2) That a further meeting of the OSC Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Spokespersons would be welcomed to consider feedback from the OSC Committees on the presentation and content of performance data.

35 **NOTICE OF MOTION: INWARD INVESTMENT**

The Assistant Director: Law and Governance reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 17 October, 2016 (minute 67 (3) refers), the Notice of Motion, 'Inward Investment', proposed by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan was referred by the Mayor to this Committee for consideration.

The Chair suggested that the Committee defer this item until the January meeting as the Leader of the Council had informed him that over 150 leads were still being followed up after his recent trip to China and he would have more information for the Committee in January.

Councillor Blakeley suggested that he had no issue with the item being deferred but that the same principle should apply to any other Notices of Motion, when neither the proposer nor seconder could be present.

The Chair responded that he would defer, if at all possible, in the future and would be totally impartial to requests for deferment. He also confirmed that amendments would be able to be moved by the Committee when the Motion was considered at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the Notice of Motion on Inward Investment be deferred to the January meeting of the Committee.

36 **NOTICE OF MOTION: TREATING ALL RESIDENTS FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY**

Prior to consideration of this item Councillor Jean Stapleton withdrew from the meeting whilst the matter was considered having declared a personal and prejudicial interest (see minute 32 ante).

The Assistant Director: Law and Governance reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 17 October, 2016 (minute 67 (4) refers), the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Steve Williams was referred by the Mayor to this Committee for consideration –

TREATING ALL RESIDENTS FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY

“Council notes the overwhelming opposition by local residents to the proposal by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to build a fire station on green belt land in Saughall Massie. To date, 2,561 people have signed a petition, 542 people have objected online and a further 524 letters and emails have been received by the Planning Department. Council also thanks the Saughall Massie Village Area Conservation Society and the Wirral Society for their opposition views.

Council further notes that when a proposal for a fire station in Greasby was proposed, the Leader of the Council instructed Council Officers to withdraw the land from consideration, saying 'Having listened to the views of local residents in Greasby and representations made by Labour's Parliamentary candidate in Wirral West, Margaret Greenwood, I believe the council-owned land in the centre of Greasby would be inappropriate for a fire station and would remove a much-loved local green space.'

Council believes that all residents and communities of the Borough should be treated fairly and equitably and therefore, recognising the massive opposition and the value of this much-loved green belt land, requests Officers to withdraw this piece of land with immediate effect and further requests that officers continue to work with the fire service to find an acceptable alternative.”

The Chair invited Councillor Blakeley to explain his motion.

Councillor Blakeley stated that if the Council was going to be fair it must be seen to be fair. More people had objected to the proposal for a Fire Station in Saughall Massie, currently 3,721, than had objected to a proposal for one in Greasby, which was subsequently withdrawn for consideration as a possible site by the Leader of the Council. People should be treated fairly; the people of Greasby were listened to and now the people of Saughall Massie should be listened to also.

The Chair responded that the matter was currently going through the Planning process with a site visit planned and planning should be allowed its due process.

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Abbey, that –

“The matter be left to the Planning Committee to see what decision was made there.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Steve Williams, that –

“The Notice of Motion be fully supported.”

The amendment was put and lost (5:7) (Two abstentions).
(The following Councillors asked that their votes be recorded - Councillors C Blakeley, G Ellis, J Hale, T Pilgrim and S Williams voting in favour; Councillor C Muspratt abstaining).

The motion was then put and carried (8:5) (One abstention).

Resolved (8:5) (One abstention) (The following Councillors asked that their votes be recorded - Councillors C Blakeley, G Ellis, J Hale, T Pilgrim and S Williams voting against; Councillor C Muspratt voting in favour) – That the matter be left to the Planning Committee to see what decision was made there.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS - PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT RISK BASED VERIFICATION

The Chair agreed to consideration of this item as a matter of urgent business to enable its consideration prior to the next scheduled meeting. He also agreed to bring the item forward on the agenda.

Nicky Dixon, Senior Benefit Manager, introduced the report which set out the preliminary details of a proposal to approve the adoption of Risk Based Verification in determining evidence requirements for the assessment of all new claims and reported change in circumstances in respect of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Scheme claims.

Risk Based Verification (RBV) was a method of applying different levels of checks to different circumstances depending on a risk profile given to each customer. The higher the deemed risk, the more the resource requirement would be in order to establish that the claim was genuine. In essence this resulted in optimum use of resource, applying it where most needed and removing any unnecessary effort where the risks were low.

Responding to comments from Members Nicky Dixon gave further details of how RBV would operate as opposed to how the current system worked. Those in the low risk category would not have a renewal period although notification would still need to be given of any circumstantial changes. RBV worked on the premise that the same level of fraud and error would be found using the existing standards of verification as would be identified under the RBV system. It should be recognised that by reducing the level of evidence required against medium risk cases the level of fraud within the system was likely to increase. This risk was largely carried by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) who paid 100% subsidy to the local authority for Housing Benefit paid. There was a risk to the local authority if fraud was identified at a later point and overpayments raised as this could lead to a reduced subsidy rate.

Nicky Dixon also commented that universal credit would be using the same process and with regard to other Local Authorities who had already introduced RBV she was not aware of any evidence to suggest an increase in fraudulent activity. She also expressed confidence that this could be rolled out with the staffing resources available.

Resolved – That this Committee supports further progression of the proposal to adopt Risk Based Verification within the Benefits service by approving the introduction of Wirral’s Risk Based Verification Policy and associated Operational Framework.

At the start of consideration of this item Councillor C Muspratt declared a personal interest by virtue of her being a trustee of Mayer Hall.

Councillor W Ward declared a personal interest by virtue of his former employment with the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, in which he had played a role in the estates strategy of Merseyside Police.

The Committee received a presentation from Jeanette Royle, Senior Manager, Asset Management and Mandy Chesters, Manager, Asset Management on the Asset Strategy.

The Strategy's vision was, 'to create an efficient, fit for purpose and sustainable estate to deliver better integrated public services across Wirral and the wider city region, to support businesses and to use our assets as an enabler for economic growth and income generation.'

The five priorities in the Asset Strategy were:

1. Place Shaping
2. Policy and Strategy
3. One Public Estate
4. Financial Efficiency
5. Managing the Corporate Portfolio

The activities in Asset Management were increasingly linked to Regeneration projects which were co-ordinated through the newly established "Assets Board". This would include further rationalisation of the Council's estate in Birkenhead (Conway, Hamilton, Treasury, Cheshire Lines, and Old Market House) with a possibility of a New Civic Centre including co-location with partners. They outlined work to be undertaken through the One Public Estate bid in respect of the two review areas, Moreton and Bebington. The work of the newly established Wirral Property Board, comprising of the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, Police, Fire, Magenta Living, Chamber of Commerce, Ambulance Service and Wirral Metropolitan College was also referred to along with the new Transformation Assets Board. The presentation also highlighted the contribution which assets made to the financial efficiency of the Council.

Members commented upon proposed new housing developments of 500 homes in certain areas, such as Leasowe and Moreton East and Eastham and the impact this would have on traffic, schools, shopping areas etc. and the need for a multiplicity of factors to be taken into account as and when these projects were developed. Concerns were also raised at the lack of Ward Councillor involvement when decisions were made about Council assets, in

particular when any developments were undertaken at Council buildings in conservation areas.

Responding to comments from Members, the Strategic Commissioner – Growth, stated that sometimes the Council did acquire land if there were certain plots which would be advantageous to purchase and which would become part of a wider regeneration project.

A Member expressed his concerns over the lack of Councillor involvement in asset decisions when one of the roles of a Councillor was to talk to their electorate and keep them informed as to what was going on. He suggested that a paper be provided on the role of Councillors in this process.

Members concurred with these sentiments and the lack of information from Asset Management, sometimes only being made aware of issues after decisions had been taken.

In response to Members' comments, both Jeanette Royle and Mandy Chesters commented that they would take back the concerns raised in respect of work going on in conservation areas. The Property Board was something which was new and had now had an inaugural meeting; its role was to put forward recommendations which would then be fed through to the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders.

A Member suggested that the presentation should be made to the four Constituency Committees as a first stage in keeping Members informed.

On a motion by Councillor R Abbey, seconded by Councillor J Hale, it was –

Resolved – That a report be brought to the January meeting of this Committee to describe and confirm the role of a Councillor in the Wirral Asset Strategy process.

39 **LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE**

At the start of consideration of this item, Councillor R Abbey declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Merseytravel Committee of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).

The Chair reported upon the work of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Scrutiny Panel which had last met on 19 October, 2016. At that meeting items under discussion had included:

- Short-Hop Bus Fares Scrutiny Review
- Governance and Revised Constitution
- Scrutiny Work Programme

A Task and Finish Scrutiny Review was also being undertaken on apprenticeships within the City Region with a final report likely to be reported to the formal Scrutiny Panel meeting in January, 2017 and the Chair elaborated on the benefits of apprenticeships.

A Member expressed the view that he believed the Government was using apprenticeships as cheap labour and that there needed to be serious scrutiny of apprenticeships.

The Chair commented that the Scrutiny Review would be hearing from both those undertaking apprenticeships and those who had dropped out of apprenticeships.

Another Member suggested the need for the Council to aim for the 'gold standard' with apprenticeships particularly within the creative industries' sector.

In respect of the appendix on the proposed principles for the operation of scrutiny in the LCRCA, it was moved by Councillor D Mitchell and seconded by Councillor C Blakeley, that –

“This Council, whilst welcoming opportunities for co-operation, funding growth and identity that the deal provides, cannot endorse the Governance Report or scrutiny principles on the lines suggested.

Whilst there are checks and balances that require unanimity between the Council Leaders and the Mayor, and majority voting in defined circumstances, there is insufficient opportunity formally set out for the Members of the Councils to influence or shape our City Region.

The Call-in process suggested is rarely likely to be triggered if the compositions of the Councils remain similar to the current configuration. Setting up and enshrining such a high bar for the Call-in process is undemocratic.

The governance mechanism does not formally require the Mayor to bring together, consult and involve members from the constituent authorities. This democratic deficit has to be addressed.”

Prior to voting on the motion, the Chair suggested that it was more relevant for this to be considered at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 6 December, 2016 and that it was the Government which was laying down the law as to how the LCRCA should be governed.

The motion was then put and lost (5:8).

Resolved – That the report be noted.

40 **2016/17 QUARTER 2 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE - BUSINESS THEME**

Alan Evans, Strategic Commissioner - Growth, introduced a report which described performance at Quarter 2 (July to September 2016). At quarter 1, a range of feedback was provided by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the reports provided. Following this, officers had met with the Committee Chairs and Spokespersons to review report provision. The report submitted was a pilot approach, agreed at that session, to provide more detail in terms of performance against each of the pledges that fell within the remit of this Committee. A list of key performance highlights was provided in the report.

Responding to comments from Members, Mike Callon, Team Leader, Performance and Scrutiny, explained how some of the indicators were measured. Indicators were identified in consultation with partners through the new partnership delivery arrangements. It was acknowledged that no indicator on its own would demonstrate the achievement of the pledges and where possible, a range of indicators and / or measures were identified to demonstrate outcomes being delivered. Indicators and measures could be either annual or quarterly. For annual indicators, data was released at different times of the year and reported in the quarter when it became available. This was a new way of performance reporting as the Wirral Plan was an outcome-focussed, partnership plan. All indicators and measures would be reviewed as part of planning for 2017/18.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

41 **FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 2016/17**

Jenny Spick, Senior Manager, Financial Planning and Policy, introduced a report which set out the projected revenue and capital monitoring position for 2016/17 as at the close of quarter 2 (30 September 2016).

The quarter two revenue forecast was for an overall underspend of £0.2 million for the year (£1.1 million overspend was forecast at quarter 1). The Families and Wellbeing overspend increased during the period but had been compensated for by increased savings within treasury management.

The quarter two capital report updated the capital programme and reflected significant re-profiling of schemes between years to reduce the 2016/17 capital programme to £38.1 million. Expenditure after the second quarter concluded was £10.6 million.

The report also provided details of the re-allocation of existing budgets to reflect the new operating model, which was implemented in November, 2016.

Jenny Spick responded to comments from Members and informed the Committee that the overspend for Families and Wellbeing did not reflect the additional investment required in light of the recent OFSTED report. She elaborated upon the Business Rates pilot scheme in the Liverpool City Region and also on the analysis of outstanding arrears for accounts receivable.

The Chair commented that there was a need to know what debt was historic and how it was moving over time, what would be recovered and what would be written off.

Resolved – That the report and appendices be noted.

42 BUSINESS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from the Chair which provided an update regarding progress made since the last Committee on 13 September on the scrutiny work programme.

The Chair asked for volunteers for a Task and Finish Scrutiny Review Panel on supporting the creative sector.

Resolved –

(1) That the proposed Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2016/17, be approved.

(2) That a Review Panel for the Supporting the Creative Sector Task & Finish Scrutiny Review, be established to include the following Members, Councillors Chris Spriggs, Julie McManus, Dave Mitchell and Warren Ward.

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BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 7 December 2016

Present:

Councillor	M Sullivan (Chair)	
Councillors	C Spriggs	W Ward
	J McManus	G Ellis
	D Realey	J Hale
	J Stapleton	D Mitchell

Deputies:

Councillors	C Muspratt (In place of A Leech)
	T Norbury (In place of RL Abbey)
	D Burgess-Joyce (In place of S Williams)
	D Elderton (In place of T Pilgrim)
	G Watt (In place of C Blakeley)
	I Williams (In place of KJ Williams)

43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that no further apologies had been received other than for Councillors Ron Abbey, Chris Blakeley, Anita Leech, Tracey Pilgrim, Jerry Williams and Steve Williams, all of whom had deputies standing in for them.

44 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

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

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

No such declarations were made.

45 CALL-IN OF CABINET MINUTES 55 AND 61 - HOYLAKE GOLF RESORT

The Chair referred to the decision of Cabinet (minutes 55 and 61) in respect of its decision on Hoylake Golf Resort and the signing of a Framework Development Agreement on the terms reported.

The decision had been called in by Councillors Chris Blakeley, Bruce Berry, Eddie Boulton, David Burgess-Joyce, David Elderton, Gerry Ellis, John Hale, Paul Hayes, Andrew Hodson, Kathy Hodson, Ian Lewis, Tracey Pilgrim, Cherry Povall, Lesley Rennie, Les Rowlands, Adam Sykes, Geoffrey Watt and Steve Williams, on the following grounds –

“The signatories to this Call-in are deeply concerned that, by agreeing to the confidential Framework Development Agreement (‘FDA’), the Council is effectively committing to a ‘done-deal’, with no clear exit strategy should the proposal prove not to be viable or financially and environmentally sustainable.

We are also disappointed that this project has never been subject to full debate by Council, so that other issues such as the impact of traffic, wildlife, flora and fauna, and effects on Wirral’s Green Belt can be fully explored; together with the alleged economic benefits to local people and to Wirral as a whole.

We believe signing the FDA renders any further consultation, prior to a formal planning application, as meaningless, contrary to the Council Leader’s reassurance to local residents and all other interested parties that ‘we will be continuing to consult and talk to people who live in Wirral, to make sure that we all move forward as partners in delivering these plans.’

Furthermore, to date £237,000 of Council Taxpayers’ hard-earned cash has been spent. To commit an additional £595,969, with the potential for further escalating costs, at a time when vital council services and jobs are being reduced, suggests that the Cabinet’s priorities are misplaced, while exposing the Council to further risk

We believe that a matter as important as this should be looked at in greater depth and detail in order to ensure adequate safeguards are in place to protect the Council Taxpayers of Wirral.”

The Chair then invited the lead signatory to address the Committee for up to five minutes

Explanation of Call-in by the Lead Signatory – Councillor Chris Blakeley

Councillor Blakeley expressed his concerns at the Cabinet decision which were not just with the financial implications but also included the consultation process and environmental concerns. He suggested that the exempt appendix containing the report on the Development Agreement and the Development Agreement itself should be in the public domain as they both contained information which it was in the public interest for the public to see. Over £830,000 of Council tax payers’ money was being gambled on this scheme. Although the Nicklaus Joint Venture Group (NJVG) would contribute £300,000 of the £596,000 the Cabinet had approved, this contribution was contingent

upon the scheme progressing and planning approval being granted. The NJVG should put up their money as well and take some of the risk, why was the Council being asked to take all the risk? The NJVG had a Statement of Capital of £1,000 with one Director having 75% of the shares of the company and one his former companies having gone into liquidation.

The Chair invited questions to the Call-in lead signatory from the Committee and his responses included the following:

- He based his assertion that the Council was committing a 'done-deal' having read through the Development Agreement in which there was a lot of information which would lead one to believe that this was the case, though as the appendix to the report was exempt he could not discuss it in detail.

Explanation of the decision taken by the Cabinet – Councillor Phil Davies (Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Economic Development, Finance and Devolution)

Councillor Phil Davies emphasised the potential benefits of the £190m project with 170 direct jobs, an 18 hole Jack Nicklaus designed signature golf course, a new replacement Jack Nicklaus designed municipal golf course, and up market hotel and spa, a Links Golf academy, new access link roads and quality housing. He was very pleased that there had also been very strong interest from the Celtic Manor Hotel Group with regard to the proposed hotel development at the proposed resort. He thought it of interest that the call-in had not been signed by the Leader of the Conservative Group. He did not believe that it was a 'done-deal' as the Council still retained control over the project with a Funding Strategy due to come to Cabinet in March, 2017.

All the ecological issues would be addressed as part of the planning process. He accepted that £595,000 was a significant amount of money but only amounted to 0.3 per cent of the total project cost. The risk at the moment was a calculated one but a risk worth taking in terms of job creation and investment. It also showed the Council's ambition for Wirral, which, in the future would be more reliant on council tax from new housing and business rates. He stated that the project was worthy of the Committee's support.

The Chair invited questions to the Cabinet Member from the Committee and his responses included the following:

- An estimated 170 direct new jobs would be created along with construction jobs for the proposed new golf facility. There would be a new 4 star hotel with restaurant and jobs would also be created through the supply chain to service all of this.

- Celtic Manor had stated that only 10 per cent of income would come from golf with the vast majority of income coming from the hotel / restaurant and people staying in the area.
- The Chief Executive of Celtic Manor had been to visit and he had stated that the golf offer would not be the only income stream; corporate businesses would be attracted to hold conventions at the hotel.
- The Council faced a funding crisis with savings of £132m to be made over the next four years and there was a desperate need to identify sources of income to enable the Council to deliver decent public services.
- The proposed resort would be a vital addition to housing council tax and business receipts.
- He believed that a project like this would help out with apprenticeships and was a tailor made opportunity for young people with many direct and indirect jobs potentially being created.
- He and officers had looked at a Jack Nicklaus course in Wales and both NJVG and Celtic Manor were experienced operators with a good track record. As a Hoylake resident he thought that it would be of benefit to residents in the Hoylake ward.
- The Council was currently conducting a review of its leisure services because they were being subsidised at a cost of £4m and there was a need to get better value for money. There were no plans at the moment to close any municipal golf courses and he would let the review currently taking place take its course. There would be a new municipal golf course which was good news for those people currently using golf courses.
- He understood that the £596,000 was in order to do some essential land preparatory work to make sure the land was safe to build the golf course on. He hoped it would be the end of any financial commitment from the Council but there may be a requirement for some further funding.
- By March of 2017 the Funding and Viability Assessment would be complete and members would be able to see the risks and rewards of the whole scheme.
- The signing of the Framework Development Agreement did not mean that the Council would be 'locked in' as the Council would still retain absolute discretion to withdraw from the whole scheme should the funding strategy not prove to be acceptable.
- It was hoped that revenue funding would amount to £4.5m over five years as well as a capital receipt from the sale of the land and overage from the share of profits from the hotel.
- The Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer of Celtic Manor were very excited by the opportunities which the location presented when they visited the site and this was the first development that they wanted to undertake outside their own development area.
- It was important to understand local views and further informal consultation would take place.
- Celtic Manor was very open to using local producers in supply chain.

Evidence from Call-in Witnesses – Elizabeth Davey, John Hutchinson, Keren O'Rourke

Elizabeth Davey, local resident

Ms Davey stated that she shared the ambitions of the Leader of the Council for Wirral and for the area to succeed. She did, however, express her concerns at the ecological impact and the loss of potential agricultural land. Land, which in 1814 had been thought worthy of draining because of the high quality of the soil. She also expressed concerns at the loss of greenbelt land and that the proposal for housing did not include any mention of affordable housing. Also, that although the Council was investing all this money the proposals might not pass the threshold for very special circumstances for development in the greenbelt.

No questions were asked of Ms Davey.

John Hutchinson, former Chairman of the Hoylake Golf Resort Committee and local resident

Mr Hutchinson addressed the Committee and informed the meeting that he was a former prospective owner of golf resorts who had made money from the sale of land. The Council was cutting millions from its budget and now was not the time to be spending £600,000 on a vanity project. Tourism income from the resort would not accrue to the Borough and it would not provide leisure to local residents. Would the roads system be able to cope with the extra traffic which would be generated? He also queried why the Langfields part of the site was not a Site of Biological Importance (SBI), was it because this would create a barrier to development? Development of Wirral's docklands would meet all of the 2020 pledges by creating jobs across the economy and new housing. He stated that two thirds of the community did not support the idea of a resort and that the site was home to the black tailed godwit in numbers that would qualify it as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The Chair invited questions to Mr Hutchinson from the Committee and his responses included the following comments:

- Golf resorts were toxic to the natural environment and to the local economy.
- None of the expenditure at the resort would leave the resort except in pay as the whole point of the golf resort was for visitors to stay within the resort.

Keren O'Rourke, local resident

Ms O'Rourke expressed her concerns as a local resident and stated that there did not appear to be a clear business plan in place. Consultants had

concluded in a previous report that the resort would not be viable without the housing aspect to the project. There were several nationally and internationally protected species and the site did meet the criteria for a SBI and SSSI. She also went on to outline objections to the proposal on greenbelt policies which only very special circumstances could overcome. Why was a golf resort seen as the only option for the site, when a site such as Martin Mere in Lancashire could provide 90 jobs rather than 170 mostly low paid jobs? She suggested that the money could be far more wisely spent.

The Chair invited questions to Ms O'Rourke from the Committee and her responses included the following comments:

- Planning consent won't be agreed and any application would be thrown out as it wouldn't meet planning policy guidelines for greenbelt development.

Evidence from Call-in and Cabinet Member witness – David Ball, Assistant Director: Environmental Services

The Chair then invited David Ball, who was appearing as both a call-in and Cabinet Member witness.

Mr Ball made no opening statement and stated that he was happy to respond to questions. His responses to questions included the following comments:

- None of the money the Council had so far spent was recoverable if the project failed, the money had to be seen as investment in taking the project forward and was no different to the way in which hundreds of other developments had been done in the past.
- This was not the only regeneration project that the Council was engaged in.
- The next stage, the Funding and Viability Assessment, would set out the costs and funding of the whole project including the sources where the funding would be coming from.
- If the project was given planning permission then the NJVG would pay £300,000 of the £596,000 that was now proposed to be spent. If this money was not invested now then the project would not happen at all.
- He did not envisage the requirement for the Council to put any more money in for consultants or legal fees and if the Funding and Viability Assessment was agreed then all the costs for the next stage onwards would drop over to the developer.
- The Council would assess the Funding and Viability Assessment and need to be satisfied that a number of conditions had been met and if any of these conditions could not be met then the Council could move away from the project.
- He confirmed the timetable for the next stages of the project and that if the Committee approved the Cabinet recommendation the Framework

Development Agreement would be signed with the funding and viability assessment plan coming to the Cabinet most likely in March, 2017.

- With regard to the Langfields site there had been some discussion as to this site being designated as a SBI and he would not have an issue with this. An SBI would carry some weight but not significant weight.
- Work was being undertaken on the project on the basis that it would need to adhere fully and satisfactorily to all environmental issues in the area. Some issues could be addressed by the design of the golf course or by off-site means.
- A meeting had been held with a number of environmental groups, including the RSPB and they had been asked to work alongside the Council to provide information to the developer. Environmental groups were willing to work on that basis without committing to support or not support the project.
- A meeting had been held with the developer and their consultants to take them through all of the Council's planning policies and they would treat the environmental side of the project with the same importance as any other. A similar scheme in South Wales had successfully worked through all of these issues.
- After the Funding and Viability Assessment was completed and, if agreed, it would be the developer's responsibility to take the project forward with their backers, it was not for the Council to take the project forward.
- NJVG had put in approximately £500,000 to date on the project on preliminary work around the course design and legal fees.
- Negotiations had taken place on the development agreement for well over 12 months and as part of these negotiations NJVG had agreed to meet 50 per cent of the £596,000 costs subject to planning permission being agreed.
- He acknowledged that he had a range of responsibilities in his role as Assistant Director: Environmental Services including regeneration and planning. The regeneration team had worked with the developer on the project but the planning team were not involved in these negotiations. If and when a planning application was submitted they would look at the planning application in light of planning policies and they would make a professional objective judgment. It would then be for the Planning Committee to make a decision, considering and weighing up all the planning merits of the application.
- If the Planning Committee was minded to approve an application then it would have to be referred to the Secretary of State and they would have to decide whether or not the application should be called in or not.
- Certain elements of the project would not constitute inappropriate development in the greenbelt but certain other areas of the project would, and the developers would need to demonstrate that very special circumstances applied. It would be for the developers to make the case for these very special circumstances and until he saw the details he could not comment on whether it would meet these or not.

Summary of the Lead Signatory – Councillor Chris Blakeley

Councillor Chris Blakeley thanked Elizabeth Davey, Keren O'Rourke and John Hutchinson for giving up their time to attend the meeting. He stated that it was not a party political issue but rather about protecting Council Tax payers' money. The Leader had said that, 'He hoped it would be the end of any financial commitment from the Council but there may be a requirement for some further funding'. Members of the Planning Committee would be involved at the planning stage, that was 13 Members, therefore 53 Members would not be involved, why not involve all 66 Members and give them the opportunity to debate the matter. He agreed that all Members wanted the best for Wirral but this was a huge risk with public money, which the Council would not get back if the project did not go ahead. The proposal was not unreasonable, however, the risk was unreasonable. Is this Committee content to support the Cabinet and gamble council tax payers' money?

Summary of the Cabinet Member – Councillor Phil Davies

This was a unique opportunity which would be of enormous benefit to Hoylake and Wirral and he did not accept that benefits would not accrue to the local economy. What was the Council's appetite for risk, the Council must be risk aware not risk averse. He acknowledged that it was a lot of money to spend, £250,000 of this was needed to be spent on making sure the landfill site was safe. If the Council didn't take this decision then nothing would happen, would the Council be saying that it didn't want any development like this to happen in Wirral. This was a £190m project to be spent in West Wirral, it would be madness not to take it to the next stage. If the Council didn't then the Council would run out of money by 2020. The call-in refers to it being a 'done-deal' but it was absolutely not it was a necessary step to get the project to the next stage. The Council was trying to put projects in place to make sure the Council had a future and he appealed to the Committee to let the project go to the next stage.

Committee debate

A Member commented that he was persuaded but not so sure that with a project this large if the Council didn't agree to give this money that the developers would not go ahead with the project which would be a massive income earner for the developer.

Another Member referred to the need to look after the public purse and expressed concern about the whole process which would have been better debated by the whole Council. The Planning Committee would pick up on the issue of a proposed site of Biological Importance.

A Member expressed his concern at whether there would be any real consultation on the greenbelt issue as the issue would only come before the

Planning Committee at the very end of the process. The proposal was for a very large hotel and not something that would disappear into the landscape, also the expanding need for enabling development was turning the proposal for housing on the site into a housing estate.

The Assistant Director: Law and Governance then reminded the Committee of the three options that were before them as part of the call-in procedure.

It was then moved by Councillor G Watt and seconded by Councillor D Elderton, that –

“Committee welcomes the opportunity to scrutinise the Cabinet’s decision on the additional spending on the proposed Hoylake Golf Resort and refers the decision back to the Cabinet Member asking that he:

- (1) Completes meaningful consultation on the proposal before acceding to the request for a further cash injection.
- (2) Carries out due diligence on the development partners’ financial standing.
- (3) On receipt of the results of the consultation and financial due diligence, refers the matter to Council, including risk management documentation.
- (4) Seeks to share the proposed costs between the investor and the Authority and releases funds only on completion of agreed stages.
- (5) Gives a commitment that no other Council owned land golf course is closed or disposed of.”

The motion was put and lost (6:8) (One abstention).

It was then moved by Councillor C Spriggs, seconded by Councillor D Realey, and –

Resolved (9:6) –

That this Committee upholds the Cabinet decision to take the necessary next steps in the development of the Hoylake Golf Resort as an exciting and ambitious project that we hope will prove beneficial to the people of Wirral in terms of jobs, local businesses, leisure opportunities, the environment and the visitor economy.

The Chair then closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

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NOTICE OF MOTION: INWARD INVESTMENT *(as referred by the Civic Mayor to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee)*

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan

This council recognises economic growth is key to realising the Wirral Plan and delivering a better life for Wirral's residents.

Council also notes, despite the government's lack of enthusiasm for their former Chancellor's flagship regeneration policy The Northern Powerhouse, this authority remains committed to working closely with other authorities in the region to drive economic success.

Council acknowledges the success to date of the Liverpool City Region in growing the economy – currently worth nearly £29billion with output increasing by 8.4% in the five years up to 2014 - and recognises Wirral's economic future is tied to the continued success of the City region.

Council further notes the benefit of having Wirral Council's Leader serve as the portfolio holder for Economic Development across the City Region and the added profile and opportunity this brings forward for Wirral.

Council is proud of the work being done by Liverpool City Region firms who have secured the 2nd highest incidence of high-growth firms in the UK, and by trade and business networks supported by this authority to attract new investment to the Wirral, including Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership and the Council's Economic Development and Growth unit.

Council supports any opportunity to continue to develop Wirral and the City Region's maturing relationship with China and Chinese businesses, especially in the key strategic growth industries of Advanced Manufacturing, Marine and Logistics and Clean Energy and Civil Nuclear Engineering.

Council welcomes the decision to partner with Liverpool Vision, Invest Liverpool, Wirral-based businesses and the local Chambers of Commerce to promote the borough and the wider City Region during a forthcoming joint trade mission to Kunming, Guiyang, Qingdao, Shanghai and Wirral's twin city, Tianjin.

Council supports every effort to drive economic growth, foster stronger relationships with investors, and promote Wirral and the wider City Region as the most attractive investment partners for Chinese and South East Asian investors.

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BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 JANUARY 2017

REPORT TITLE:	THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS IN WIRRAL'S ASSET STRATEGY
REPORT OF:	JEANNETTE ROYLE, SENIOR MANAGER, ASSET MANAGEMENT

REPORT SUMMARY

Following the meeting of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 29 November 2016, members asked that a report be brought to the next meeting to describe and confirm the role of a Councillor in the Wirral Asset Strategy process.

The proposals support the recognition that Members act to ensure that any new developments deliver the greatest benefits for their communities and helping shape major schemes.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Members consider and accept the proposed new arrangements for member engagement when considering proposed asset changes.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To allow sufficient information regarding Council Assets to be shared with Ward Members and permit appropriate dialogue.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 None.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 The Wirral Asset Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 27 June 2016. The strategy provides the in-sight on the importance of Wirral's public sector assets and how they support the delivery of the Wirral Plan by generating income and capital receipts for reinvestment and ensuring best value for money from our assets. The strategy document identifies 5 priority areas:

- (i) Place Shaping
- (ii) Asset Policy and Strategy
- (iii) One Wirral Public Estate
- (iv) Financial Efficiency
- (v) Managing the Corporate Portfolio

The scope of the strategy extends to closer partnership working, commercial approach, enabling growth, modernising the estate including digital connection, rationalisation of assets and financial control for both revenue and capital requirements.

It is set against these priorities and scope that Councillors play an important role in the future of Council assets and the financial stability of the Council.

- 3.2 A number of forums currently exist at which Assets are discussed these are:

Forum Name	Purpose	Attendees
Wirral Property Board	Co-ordination of asset activity between all Wirral Partnership members working to the national One Public Estate agenda. Meets quarterly.	CCG, Police, Fire, Ambulance, Magenta Living, Wirral Met College, HCA, Chamber of Commerce
Growth and Property Board	Weekly meeting to monitor the progress of key asset related projects particularly those within the key development areas	Council staff from the Strategic Hub, Business Services and Delivery. Chaired by Alan Evans.
Assets Transformation Programme Board	Monthly meeting to monitor key transformation projects, including Commercialisation	Chaired by David Armstrong, officers from the transformation team and senior manager

		across Strategic, Business and Delivery.
Assets and Capital Group	Monthly meeting to coordinate asset activity across the Council, including service demands, future needs, monitoring of Capital projects, assets disposals	Officer representatives from all Council departments. Chaired by Finance department.

- 3.3 The Assets and Capital Group provide the forum for early discussions on any asset proposals and a representative from each Council department is present. This membership allows a thorough discussion to take place on any issues which could arise out of a proposed disposal, change of use, co-location opportunities and future service needs which have asset implications including housing and extra care needs.

A template is used at these meetings to assess any proposals brought forward and referred to as the Asset Challenge document, this allows the officers to assess the proposal to achieve the best outcome for the asset. One example could be a plot of waste land which has no current benefit to the Council, a number of options depending on the size, location and value could include: housing, retail, community use, extra care or a mix of options. Considerations are based around delivering the Wirral Plan, financial, service requirements, growth etc. It is proposed that this is shared more widely with ward members, portfolio holders and specific member interest groups prior to a Cabinet or delegated report being written. This will provide members with the background information to the assets under consideration.

- 3.4 Asset disposals, change of use, acquisitions, transfers etc are considered either by Cabinet or through delegated authority, the route of approval will be determined by the content of the report i.e.

Delegated Authority

These reports are not key decisions but have been considered to be of significant interest.

- The disposal of surplus land, buildings and other assets up to the value of £2,500,001 by sale or lease.
- The purchase or lease of land, buildings and other assets up to a value of £1,250,000.
- The removal of restrictive covenants on land, in consultation with the Director of Business Services (or nominee), where the increase in land value as a result is less than £250,000.

Cabinet (Key Decision)

All executive functions/matters may be referred by the Leader and/or Cabinet Members and Officers to Cabinet for consideration, determination and/or decision.

Generally only those executive functions/matters that fall into one or more of the following categories should be referred to Cabinet:

- The matter under consideration is a high profile matter;
- The decision has a significant budgetary impact;

- There is a need or it is considered prudent to engage the public and/or raise public awareness; and/or
- The function/matter provides important performance management information.

In both these cases ward members will be privy to the content of the report prior to publication, the portfolio holder will ask for ward member comments on the recommendations being put forward.

- 3.5 There are a number of significant development areas across the Borough which are likely to be brought forward for consideration, these could impact on the locality, it is therefore prudent that ward members are aware of these proposals. It is proposed that when these schemes/developments are identified that ward members be briefed by the Asset Management team. The level of consultation required will vary from project to project and this will be communicated to ward members as soon as the scope of the project is drawn up. Statutory consultation will of course be undertaken as per planning regulations.

ASSET INFORMATION SHARING

- 3.6 There are a number of existing arrangements by which Members are informed of changes to assets within their constituency areas. It is proposed that some additional information sharing stages are introduced which will better inform Members of the suggested changes.

Small disposals, transfers, change of use	Delegated report circulated to Ward Members by Portfolio holder prior to final sign-off of the report giving authority for the transaction to proceed.	Existing arrangement
Key decisions	Cabinet report will be shared with Ward Members prior to publication i.e. declaring sites surplus	Existing arrangement
Area reviews	It is proposed that area reviews as they are worked up by officers, consultants etc these are shared with Ward Members; particularly with regard to the desired outcomes for the area e.g. retail, community, housing, open space. This will allow Members to obtain local opinions of businesses and members of the public prior to any formal statutory consultation.	Proposed
Asset Challenge Document	This document assists the Assets and Capital Group reach preferred options for an asset under review. It is proposed that this document is shared with ward members at the earliest opportunity following the Assets and Capital Group recommendations.	Proposed
Engagement Strategy (review)	Review the information available for when community engagement will take place; it is proposed that a joint review is undertaken by the constituency team, planning and asset management.	Proposed

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None arising from this report.

6.0 RE SOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The Wirral Asset Strategy provides the vision and details the actions to deliver the strategy.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 None

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 This report outlines the routes of consultation and discussion available to members.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No as there are no implications for equal opportunities arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Jeanette Royle**
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APPENDICES

1. Asset Challenge document

REFERENCE MATERIAL

1. Wirral Asset Strategy.

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ASSET CHALLENGE TEMPLATE (v2)

Location				
Address				
Ward Ward Member details				
Parliamentary Constituency				
Tenure		Registered Title		
Site Plan	Photograph			
Property GIA		Site Area		
Site Description				
Planning Status				
Legal Implications Summary				
Is this asset located in any of the Borough's 4 major development areas? If not, please tick not applicable				
Birkenhead Town Centre	Birkenhead Hinterland	A41 Corridor	Wirral Waters	Not Applicable
<p align="center">Section 1 – Disposals</p> <p align="center"><i>If this proposal is for a strategic acquisition please substitute with Section 2 of the template (please delete as necessary)</i></p>				
Estimated Value				
Valuation Notes				

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

Financial Costs (if applicable):	Utilities		R & M	
Private Housing (Sale value plus following financial benefits)	Estimated No. of Dwellings	New Homes Bonus p.a.	Affordable Homes Award p.a.	Council Tax p.a.
Savings				
Or Social Housing (Sale value plus following financial benefits)	Estimated No. of Dwellings	New Homes Bonus p.a.	Affordable Homes Award p.a.	Council Tax p.a.
Savings				
Or Extra Care	Estimated No. of Dwellings	New Homes Bonus p.a.	Affordable Homes Award p.a.	Council Tax p.a.
Savings				
Or Lease Out	Annual Income (p.a.)	Business rates (p.a.)		
Savings				
Or Potential Commercial Floor Space: (if applicable)	Area (m. sq.)	Annual Income		Business Rates
Community Asset Transfer Savings				
Section 2 – Acquisition				
Cost of Acquisition				

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

Valuation Notes				
Financial Costs (if applicable):	Utilities		R & M	
Private Housing	Estimated No. of Dwellings	New Homes Bonus p.a.	Affordable Homes Award p.a.	Council Tax p.a.
Total Financial Benefits p.a.				
Social Housing	Estimated No. of Dwellings	New Homes Bonus p.a.	Affordable Homes Award p.a.	Council Tax p.a.
Total Financial Benefits p.a.				
Or Extra Care	Estimated No. of Dwellings	New Homes Bonus p.a.	Affordable Homes Award p.a.	Council Tax p.a.
Total Financial Benefits p.a.				
Lease Out	Annual Income (p.a.)	Business rates (p.a.)		
Total Financial Benefits p.a.				
Potential Commercial Floor Space: (if applicable)	Area (m. sq.)	Annual Income		Business Rates

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

Total Financial Benefits p.a.	
----------------------------------	--

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

Option Appraisal	Disposal		Acquisition	
	Lease Out			
	Community Asset Transfer			
	Retain as an Operational Building			
Asset & Capital Group Recommendation(s)				
Disposal or acquisition (delete as appropriate)	Develop	Community Asset Transfer/Lease	Retain as Core Operational	Retain as Surplus
Outcome(s)				
Capital Receipt	Economic Growth	Service Delivery	Savings	Social Value & Community Resilience
Recommendation (Additional details)				

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

PLEDGES		
Which pledge(s) does this recommendation relate to?		
BUSINESS	Assets and buildings are fit for purpose <i>Wirral businesses are looking for new and refurbished commercial space to grow and expand into. We must ensure the best use of our real estate by linking them to business and community aspirations</i>	
BUSINESS	Thriving small businesses <i>We will work with our partners and other community groups to deliver net additional 250 new businesses in Wirral over the next 5 years. We will make it easier for our small businesses to grow and will work to improve local high streets and our town centre economy</i>	
BUSINESS	Vibrant tourism economy <i>We will review and make best use of our heritage, leisure and cultural assets to drive tourism, the associated creation of jobs and increase revenue for Wirral's visitor economy to £450 million by 2020</i>	
BUSINESS	Greater job opportunities in Wirral <i>We will provide an increase in the number and range of jobs in Wirral so all our residents can find employment opportunities. To make progress towards this goal we will see the creation and safeguarding of 5,000 jobs by 2020.</i>	
BUSINESS	Increase inward investment <i>To grow our economy we have to identify local, national and international opportunities to bring investment into Wirral. Commit to ensuring £250 million of private sector investment</i>	
ENVIRONMENT	Community services are joined up and accessible <i>We will integrate more services with our partners and work with voluntary and community groups to transfer local assets for them to manage directly, providing the services residents need.</i>	
ENVIRONMENT	Good quality housing that meets the needs of residents <i>Improve the quality and supply of Wirral's housing stock, providing more affordable homes and specialist housing solutions, including extra care homes and supported living accommodation. By 2020 build 3,500 new homes, improve 2,250 private sector houses and bring 1,250 empty homes back into use.</i>	
FINANCIAL	By 2020 - reduce spending by £120 million	

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

There are 7 key action areas that are critical to transforming Wirral's economy over the next 5 years and beyond. Please select which of these key areas this recommendation has the potential to deliver? Please tick multiple choices where applicable.

Growing Competitive Businesses	Enable business start-up, job creation and boosting the local economy	
Increasing Employment-Greater Job Opportunities	Identify strategic employment sites for inclusion in the proposed Single City Regional Framework	
Workforce Skills Match Business Needs	Meet local employer & economic growth priorities	
Increasing Inward Investment	Bring forward development sites and business accommodation	
Developing a Vibrant Tourism Economy	Maximise use of assets with focus on key attractions e.g. coast, countryside, golf, Hamilton Square & Birkenhead Park	
Transport	Have the necessary infrastructure in place to meet the current and future needs of businesses and residents to enable efficient movement of people and goods	
Housing Growth	Bring forward housing sites, unlock blockages and kick start stalled housing sites	

Transforming Assets – Asset Challenge Template

Approvals		
Capital & Asset Group Approval	Print Name	
	Sign	
	Date	
Senior Leadership Team Approval	Print Name	
	Sign	
	Date	

Version Control		
Date	Version	Amended By
10 March 2016	1	Mandy Chesters
15 March 2016	2	Mandy Chesters



Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee 24 January 2017

REPORT TITLE:	Tourism Scrutiny Review
REPORT OF:	The Chair of the Scrutiny Review Panel

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the findings and recommendations arising from a Scrutiny Review completed in November 2016. The Review was commissioned as part of the former Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee's 2015/16 work programme.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- Members are requested to consider the contents of this report and endorse the findings and recommendations of the review.
- The committee refers the report and recommendations to Cabinet for its endorsement.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

For the committee to endorse the work of the Review Panel and refer the findings and recommendations on to Cabinet.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The review was prioritised as part of the former Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee's work programme.

4.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As part of the former Regeneration & Environment Policy & Performance Committee's Work Programme, a Task & Finish scrutiny review on tourism was added to the committee's work programme. The main objective of the review was to look at how the Council markets its tourism offer, including heritage, and to identify if there are any gaps that can be exploited.

The Review Panel evaluated Wirral's marketing activity and how it worked with the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership for support in marketing Wirral's offer.

A number of recommendations have been made as a result of the review and these are detailed in the report of the Scrutiny Review Panel (Appendix 1).

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are none arising from this report.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are none arising from this report.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

There are none arising from this report.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

There are none arising from this report.

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Not applicable

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are none arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Tourism Scrutiny Review Report

REFERENCE MATERIAL

N/A

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

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Tourism Scrutiny Review

**A report produced by a Scrutiny Panel for the
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

TOURISM SCRUTINY REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2	ORIGINAL SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY.....	3
3	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS	4
4	MEMBERS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL.....	6
5	KEY FINDINGS.....	8
6	APPENDICES	
	Scope Document.....	18

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the former Regeneration & Environment Policy & Performance Committee's Work Programme, a Task & Finish Scrutiny Review of Tourism was agreed to be carried out and a Review Panel comprising of four Members of the Committee was established. The purpose of the review was to look at how the Council promotes and markets its tourism offer and to identify any gaps in its offer that can be exploited.

2. ORIGINAL SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope

A scoping meeting was convened with the Senior Manager for Visitor Economy and the agreed scoping document is included as Appendix 1.

2.2 Methodology

The scrutiny review was informed by a number of question and answer evidence sessions with Council officers and external stakeholders. These included:

- The Head of Visitor Economy, Wirral Council
- The Strategic Commissioner for Growth
- The Head of Visitor Economy Development, Local Enterprise Partnership
- Wirral Council's Heritage Officer

To support Members of the Review Panel, the evidence sessions were supported with a number of briefing papers and presentations. These included:

- A summary of tourism marketing activity carried out by the Council
- An overview of Wirral's heritage assets
- A presentation covering the roles and responsibilities of the Local Enterprise Partnership for marketing tourism across the Liverpool City Region.

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Panel identified that Wirral has the fastest growing economy in the City Region (Valued at £386 million in 2016). This is also remarkable considering the operational budget available to promote Wirral's tourism assets.

Members were interested in understanding what marketing activity was carried out to promote tourism in Wirral, with consideration also given to the demographics targeted. Key marketing activity included short break and day visitor campaigns, press visits, website promotion and a more focussed approach to using social media. Wirral also has service level agreements in place with both Marketing Liverpool and Marketing Cheshire to promote Wirral's tourism offer, with a focus on tourism literature distribution and through their respective websites.

A perception from some Members leading up to the review was the perception that the Local Enterprise Partnership was heavily focussed on tourism for Liverpool and this was one of the initial triggers for the review. However, Members acknowledged the more strategic focus that has developed across the Liverpool City Region and this is positive for Wirral in moving forward in marketing its tourism offer.

Although there has been more emphasis on marketing to the over 55s and families, this is consistent with research carried out in 2011 which highlighted Wirral's visitor demographics. Early indication from new research carried out in 2016 highlighted new market segments that could be attracted to Wirral's offer and the research will be used to help develop the new Tourism strategy going forward in 2017.

Wirral's heritage offer was explored and the Review Panel praised the success of Wirral's Heritage Open Days which are scheduled every year and attract a high number of visitors to buildings which are normally closed to the public or provide free access to those that charge. The review identified the importance of volunteers as most heritage activity is delivered by them. The Review Panel recognised a need to understand what support can be provided to volunteers to help ensure volunteer activity can be maintained and potentially increased. There is also potential to advise volunteers on promoting events through Wirral Council media and other media platforms and further develop their knowledge on Wirral's Tourism heritage assets through Welcome Host sessions delivered by Wirral Met College.

Recommendation 1

Wirral Council should engage with relevant stakeholders to develop and deliver workshop sessions for the benefit of Wirral's volunteer groups. The objectives of these sessions should include:

- *Understanding the role of volunteers and how they could be supported more, where feasible;*
- *Providing advice and guidance on using social media and the opportunities available through Wirral Council media and other marketing opportunities to promote events; and*
- *Delivering 'Welcome Host' training through Wirral Met College.*

Although the Review Panel believes that the Council has not fully explored and developed its cultural offer in relation to tourism, Members are assured that the integration of culture with tourism, leisure and growth through the relevant strategies will address this moving forward.

Additionally, the Review Panel consider that the return of the Giants to Liverpool in 2018 is an opportunity to raise the profile of Wirral through developing a complementary programme of activities.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recognises the importance of Wirral's cultural offer as part of developing the Council's Tourism Strategy. The Review Panel therefore fully supports the drive to integrate culture with tourism, leisure and growth through the relevant strategies and that this commitment is maintained by the Council going forward to enable a more developed tourism offer.

Recommendation 3

A strategy should be developed to enable Wirral to take advantage of the return of the Giants in 2018 and deliver a programme of activity that will raise the profile of Wirral. This should align to the Cultural Steering Group and emerging Tourism Strategy.

There is potential for Birkenhead Market to be a key feature for developing its tourism offer as part of the regeneration of Birkenhead. The review highlighted that the Council should take a leadership role in ensuring that the market plays a key role in the developments within the core Town Centre if it wants Birkenhead to be a market town

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that Birkenhead Market should be a key feature in the regeneration of Birkenhead and linked to the emerging strategic framework for Birkenhead.

The Review Panel considered Wirral's transport links to its key attractions. There are known issues as Wirral's offer is spread across the whole of the borough and that Wirral could benefit from travel cards / smart cards for visitors to get value from travelling around Wirral and the introduction of better routes to key attractions but this is a Liverpool City Region issue.

Recommendation 5

Wirral Council should ensure strategic conversations are held with Merseytravel to consider all issues relating to improving transport across Wirral. These should be linked to the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy for Birkenhead and wider Wirral which should address some of these issues.

4 MEMBERS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL

Councillor Jerry Williams (Chair)



“I wish to thank my fellow Council colleagues for their help and support in undertaking this review. Although the Review Panel looked at how Wirral’s tourism offer, including heritage, is marketed, the review was initiated due to concerns raised by a number of people around the lack of support Wirral has received from the Local Enterprise Partnership for tourism in Wirral. In addition, there were also specific concerns around heritage tourism assets not being promoted in an inclusive manner. The Review Panel recognised the importance of culture to tourism and the development of a Culture Strategy is very positive.

The recommendations made as a result of this review should help the Council move forward in a more cohesive way. Regardless, Wirral can be very proud of its tourism and heritage and the work that is going on for the benefit of our visitors.”

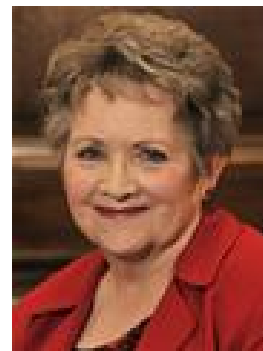
Councillor Adam Sykes



Councillor Christine Spriggs



Councillor Jean Stapleton



5 KEY FINDINGS

5.1 Background to Wirral's Visitor Economy

Wirral's visitor economy is driven by the Tourism Pledge detailed within the Wirral Plan for 2020:

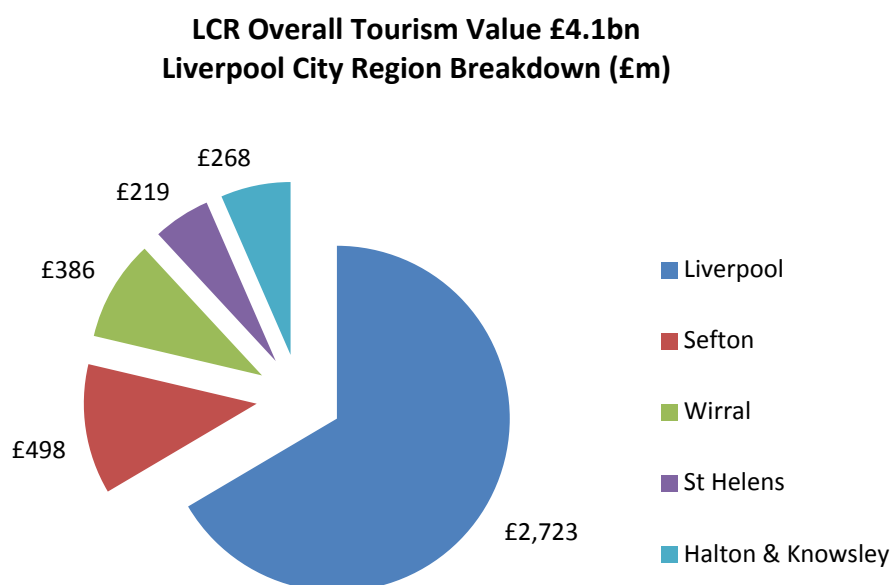
"To increase jobs & revenue and achieve a total value of £450 million for Wirral's tourism sector by 2020."

It is also driven by the Wirral Visitor Economy Network (WVEN) vision:

"To increase Wirral's visitor economy to £550 million by 2025 by encouraging more visitors to come and discover our hidden peninsula, full of award winning surprises."

The WVEN is a sector led network established by the Council to help drive Wirral's visitor economy. It consists of six partnerships (Accommodation, Attractions, Coast, Food & Drink, Golf, and History & Heritage) and is open to all tourism businesses in Wirral and beyond through annual membership fees. Led by partners from these sub-groups and senior council officers, it provides members with a number of benefits including promotional and marketing activity to attract more visitors, related spend as well as providing networking opportunities and support with grant aid.

The Review Panel was informed that in 2014, the Liverpool City Region Enterprise Partnership (LCR LEP) highlighted Wirral as having the fastest growing visitor economy in the City Region and valued at over £355 million. North West Research, which is a full-service research agency operated by the LCR LEP, reported in July 2016 that Wirral's tourism was valued at £386 million.



5.2 Wirral's Tourism Marketing Activities

The Review Panel was informed of the key marketing activities for 2016/17 to help deliver the Wirral Plan tourism pledge and the WVEN vision. The Review Panel also acknowledged that these activities would be delivered by Wirral's Visitor Economy Team with a reduced operational budget of £65K. However, this budget is also supported by approximately £26K in income from WVEN membership fees (£22K) plus advertising and sponsorship (£4K) for the same period giving a total budget of £91K. This budget also includes staffing costs.

A summary of the key marketing activities for 2016/17 is detailed below and these were further explored by the Review Panel as part of a question and answer session.

'Discover Wirral' Short Break Campaign

The 'Discover Wirral' campaign was carried out in the summer of 2016 to market Wirral as a destination for short break holidays with an outcome of contributing to a 5% increase in short break visitors to Wirral. This was delivered through the VisitWirral website, national magazines, national press supplements and radio features. The target demographic for this campaign was predominantly the 55 years and over age group and those within a 2 hour drive of Wirral.

'Wonders of Wirral' Day Visitor Campaign

The 'Wonders of Wirral' day visitor campaign aims to promote the best Wirral has to offer and to build on increasing visitor numbers and encourage repeat visits by focussing on the wide range of attractions. These include parks and gardens, culture and heritage, shopping and entertainment targeted at families and the more affluent. The campaign involved:

- A promotion on the VisitWirral website
- Promotion within the 2016 Visit Liverpool Guide (spring/summer)
- Promotion within the 2016 Chester & Cheshire Guide
- Promotion through regional magazines
- Radio features
- Gateway poster sites (e.g. Chester and Liverpool)
- Cruise Liverpool website advertising (i.e. day visitor packages).
- A 'Wonders of Wirral' for 2016/17 brochure, developed and distributed throughout the North West of England.

Both campaigns incorporate a number of competitions for the public to enter and these are delivered through various mechanisms, including social media. The number of competition entries received for each campaign is used as a measure of their success. As of November 2016, there were 15,700 competition entrants for the 'Discover Wirral' campaign and 7,800 for the 'Wonders of Wirral' campaign. Although these represent an 11% and 3% decrease respectively against entrants from 2015, it was explained that this was as a result of a reduced marketing budget but these figures are still very positive.

2017/18 Wirral Group Travel Guide

The Wirral Group Travel Guide is a new guide targeted at those across the North West of England and beyond who are looking to visit a "hidden gem" in Wirral. The guide will be used to market Wirral's tourism offer at Group Travel Trade events with a target demographic of age 55 years and over in a 2 hour and beyond drive-time of Wirral.

'Celebrate in Wirral' – Wedding and Celebration Guide

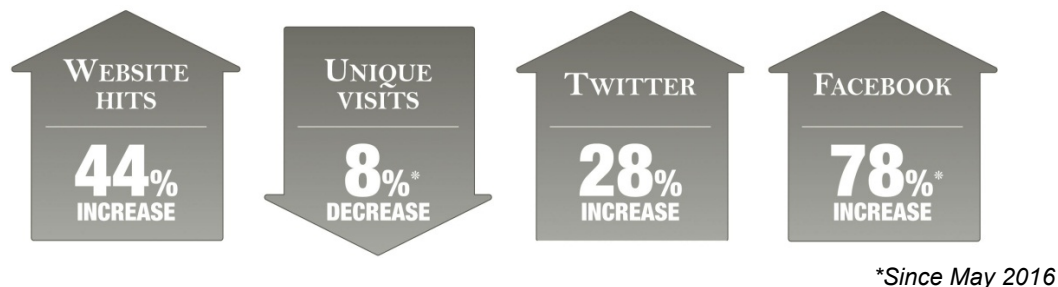
Celebrate in Wirral is a new guide which aims to market weddings or other celebrations to encourage people to visit a particular Wirral area or venue. It also targets people across the North West of England and beyond looking to marry or celebrate at a "hidden gem" in Wirral. As this is a new venture, the Review Panel was assured that the success of this will be measured by officers. At the Liverpool Wedding Show held in September 2016, the Celebrate in Wirral stand attracted 80 enquiries with provisional bookings received by WVEN members and although a new venture, this is seen as promising.

Press Visits

A number of press visits are carried out each year, specifically targeted at the regional and national press, and these are seen as a cost-effective way of marketing Wirral's offer. Although the expenditure to carry these out is £3K, the Senior Manager for Visitor Economy explained to the Review Panel that the return on its investment is received through the publication of articles online or through national magazines and through radio which generates good PR for Wirral's tourism assets and offer. The Review Panel was informed that the value of press visits in 2015 was approximately £200k based on the equivalent advertising and readership. Based on this outcome, the continuation of press visits is supported by the Review Panel for the positive impact and contribution they have to promote Wirral's tourism offer.

Website and Social Media

Web Statistics (July 2015 to June 2016 compared to July 2014 to June 2015)



The Review Panel recognised the growing importance of social media as a marketing tool. Members were informed that a 'Visit Wirral' Facebook page was deactivated in December 2014 but reinstated in May 2016 following a request from WVEN members and saw its reach increase significantly. More content is now being promoted through the platform going forward. Wirral also has an equivalent Twitter account and, as at August 2016, had 11k followers. Both social media tools are increasing its reach in number of followers.

Wirral's Visitor Economy Team administers and manages the 'Visit Wirral' website (www.visitwirral.com) which was originally created in 2006 in preparation for the The Open Championship held at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club. The website extensively promotes Wirral's key attractions, activities, festivals and its coast and countryside assets. The website also features Wirral's accommodation offer and bookings can be made online.

The VisitWirral website currently gets around one million hits per year and this is a 44% increase on the previous year (July 2014 to June 2015). 500K of these visits are unique which represents an 8% decrease on the previous year, but this has been attributed to the visit of the Three Queens in May 2015 which resulted in a higher pull to the website. Although the Review Panel initially queried whether visitors were actively using the site, i.e. to book accommodation or events, it was accepted that many people simply prefer to make bookings

directly with the provider. There has been a small increase in bookings made through the website but Wirral does not take any fee for these. This is covered through WVEN membership fees paid in each year.

The Review Panel heard anecdotally from the Senior Manager for Visitor Economy that positive feedback has been received from WVEN members who have commented that the website is working for them as a marketing tool. The Head of Visitor Economy Development for the LEP also added that a survey was carried out by the LEP as part of its research and this included surveying stakeholders in the Wirral Visitor Economy Network. The Review Panel was informed that the responses reported back indicated a general sense of satisfaction that the website is working well for the WVEN members alongside all other member benefits. The Review Panel was also assured that all booking activity through the website is monitored. However, it was the opinion of the Review Panel that WVEN members should have some responsibility for tracking website activity themselves.

The Review Panel's initial observation around the general marketing activity was that the key demographics targeted are the age 55 and over and families. Although Members recognised their importance as a target market, the marketing for the younger demographic and individuals were identified as segments which could be explored further as part of Wirral's marketing activity. However, Members were informed that its current target demographics were identified from the Wirral Visitor Research Study carried out in 2011 which was commissioned by Wirral to measure efficiency, effectiveness and gaps in the market. The research study highlighted:

- 57% of visitors are 55+ plus with 58% being women and 42% men
- 65% are ABC1s (i.e. more affluent) compared with 51% of the national population.

New research is in the process of being completed by the LEP which will inform the new Tourism Strategy as part of the delivery of the Wirral Plan Tourism Pledge. This research includes looking at existing visitor numbers, potential visitors, stakeholder feedback and the effectiveness of Wirral's marketing collateral (website, literature etc.). The Review Panel learnt that as part of the research, a segmentation model is also being developed with early indications of other market segments that could be attracted to Wirral's offer, including the younger demographic. The Review Panel was assured that these will be considered as part of the new Tourism Strategy.

The Review Panel was also interested in reviewing what other smaller cities are doing to market tourism when close to a large city. The Review Panel was informed that, as part of the new Wirral Visitor Research Study, this benchmarking activity will be carried out and the agreed that it would not be duplicated for the purpose of the review.

5.3 Partnership Arrangements

Marketing Liverpool / Marketing Cheshire

To further promote Wirral's Tourism offer, Service Level Agreements are in place for both Marketing Liverpool and Marketing Cheshire. Marketing Cheshire is the agency for promoting Cheshire and Warrington nationally and internationally to visitors and businesses. Wirral's tourism offer is included in Marketing Cheshire's tourism distribution on its website, highlighted at high footfall locations and included in press visits. Measurement of its success includes press visits featuring Wirral, media coverage including Wirral and banner advertising on e-

newsletters featuring Wirral. It was reported that an effective working relationship has developed between Wirral and Marketing Cheshire, developed through regular meetings.

Promotion of Wirral's tourism offer through Marketing Liverpool is mainly digital with Wirral's products being included on the Visit Liverpool website. Additionally, WVEN members have their own dedicated page on the site. The Review Panel was informed that Wirral is currently evaluating the hits on the website to measure the impact the site is having for WVEN members. Wirral's offer is also being included on Visit Liverpool's social media (Facebook and Twitter) and the success of this will be measured when an appropriate benchmark is identified.

Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership

Wirral pays an annual membership fee of £7K to the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LCR LEP) for research, strategic input and grant support. The role of the LCR LEP in relation to visitor economy across the City Region was explained to the Review Panel by the Head of Visitor Economy Development (Liverpool LEP). Previously, the LEP used to be The Merseyside Partnership but this changed from 2010 from being a broader investment agency with significant resources to how it operates now but with a reduced budget and staff resource. The key focus is on sector development and this includes visitor economy. The LEP works with other local authorities across the city region where they have particular interests in those sectors. It also provides support across the city region with grant funding opportunities, advice and guidance as well as taking a lead in policy and strategy. It is largely funded through membership with some funding from central government.

The Review Panel was informed that under a new operating model, a new way of working was developed. Instead of working in isolation, the LEP now operates in collaboration with the respective tourist departments from all local authorities within the Liverpool City Region. The Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Board helps to shape and develop the vision and strategy within the visitor economy and also acts as the strategic advisory and decision making body for visitor economy across the region. The board includes the respective Chair of each local authority's visitor economy network or board in the City Region. However, the agenda was predominantly focussed on activity in Liverpool as Liverpool did not have its own visitor economy board. As Liverpool has now created a separate Liverpool Board and with the introduction of membership fees, there is now a more strategic focus across the City Region.

The LEP Visitor Economy Team operates as the official Liverpool City Region Tourist Board under Visit Liverpool. It was explained that the reason for its name is that people associate the City Region with Liverpool but this allows a better understanding of how the various authorities work alongside Liverpool, particularly overseas. Marketing Liverpool was commissioned to deliver the destination marketing activity for the tourist board ensuring that Wirral's core products are represented within domestic and overseas marketing and that Wirral has visibility on the website (www.VisitLiverpool.com). Wirral is well represented with all key attractions detailed including the U-Boat Story, Spaceport, Lady Lever Art gallery, New Brighton, Wirral Sailing Centre and the borough's golf clubs. Information on location, public transport links, contact information, prices, and nearby attractions to draw in longer stays are also detailed.

The LEP's responsibility also includes managing the LCR Visitor Economy Board, carrying out research and intelligence and grant support. A key piece of research undertaken is applying the STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) economic impact modelling process to measure the value of Wirral's tourism economy every year. The LEP's role is to collect data such as hotel occupancy and attractions data which will be put into the STEAM

model to get a breakdown of visitor numbers, visitor spend, day visitors, etc. It was explained that this process is fundamental to how Wirral visitor economy is measured.

The Review Panel welcomed the more broadened strategic focus of the LEP as previous criticism from Members was that there was too much focus on Liverpool at the expense of Wirral and other local authorities in the City Region. The Strategic Commissioner for Growth acknowledged that the previous partnership working with the LEP was not as effective as Wirral did not engage as much as it could have. Wirral is now addressing this through its growth agenda which has much more of a wider partnership focus.

LEP Grant Support

As stated earlier in this report, one of the LEP's responsibilities is to identify grant funding opportunities for local authorities across the Liverpool City Region. The Review Panel was informed that a key funding opportunity accessed through the LEP is The Mersey Rural Leader Fund. This is an EU programme that aims to provide funding for businesses and organisations looking to begin or expand their operations in rural areas and is only open to areas in the Liverpool City Region that fall into a rural postcode. In the last round (2009-2014), a fund of £2.2 million was available of which Wirral secured over £1.25 million. This contributed to 40% of the project costs with the remaining 60% put in by businesses. For Wirral, this resulted in support for 12 rural tourism businesses with 73 FTEs created and is a positive outcome.

Although Wirral Council has not undertaken any mapping exercise to identify grant funders for key projects, an exercise to map funders across the Liverpool City Region is being completed by the LEP and the results will be presented to Senior Officers in the Strategic Hub to support future delivery. It was explained by the Head of Visitor Economy Development for the LEP that the difficulty with carrying out a mapping exercise is that local authorities don't always have projects at the time when funding is available as there are tight deadlines for applications. It is understood that this is a problem that has been identified for all local authorities in the Liverpool City Region.

The Review Panel was made aware of funding opportunities, such as Coastal Communities, Heritage Lottery and Arts Council funding that could be available to Wirral. Assurance was provided by the Senior Manager for Visitor Economy that these are being explored by the Council for key projects moving forward and that the process should be helped with the development of the new operating model and the focus of the Council on strategy and delivery.

5.4 Wirral's Heritage Assets and Volunteers

The Review Panel explored Wirral's Heritage assets and key sites as part of the Council's tourism offer. Members heard from the Council's Heritage Officer that heritage is an important tourism driver, particularly in the North West. It was the Heritage officer's opinion that given the wealth of assets and Wirral's strategic location, it is ideally placed to maximise tourism to the local economy and Wirral does have a good track record of doing this.

Members were informed that Wirral has over 1,000 listed buildings. 65 of Wirral's Grade 1 buildings (buildings which are of exceptional interest) are of national significance. 100 of Wirral's Grade 2 buildings (particularly important buildings of more than special interest) are of regional importance. There are also 9 ancient monuments of outstanding archaeological significance. One of these is Birkenhead Priory with another 3 being registered historic parks

and gardens. There are 26 Conservation Areas which may include listed buildings but designated locally through planning legislation because of their architectural or historic interest. Wirral also has hundreds of other buildings or sites which attract or have the potential to attract visitors.

Wirral's significant visitor destinations include the Williamson Art Gallery, Lady Lever, Port Sunlight and Birkenhead Priory which has changed through work done by volunteers and the introduction of craft fares. Although there is a desire to attract more visitors to transition itself from being regarded as a local person venue, the Review Panel acknowledge that its location is a significant problem.

Wirral has eleven buildings on the National Heritage at Risk Register because of poor condition. However, in the last 4 years, three of its heritage sites have been taken off and this was viewed as very positive by the Review Panel. Birkenhead Priory is one that was removed due to capital investment being matched by Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Review Panel acknowledged that there are challenges to marketing heritage to visitors. The Heritage Officer commented that one of the difficulties Wirral has, apart from flagship destinations such as Port Sunlight, Lady Lever and potentially Birkenhead Priory, is that it doesn't have the National Trust properties. Wirral also does not have the standout sites and most of its heritage interests are relatively small, low key and spread out.

The Review Panel is very supportive of Wirral's Heritage Open Days. Heritage Open Days are key events for Wirral and take place over a nine day programme held in September each year. During this period, free access is granted to buildings which are normally closed to the public or charge an admission fee. Heritage Open Days have been running for ten years with the Heritage Officer commenting that they are more successful each year in terms of drawing in visitors and promoting Wirral's heritage assets. In 2015, there were approximately 7000 visitors over the 70 different buildings which were open to the public. Most of these were listed. Wirral has the second largest number of Heritage Open Days in the country but other areas are catching up. Members were made aware that there is a lack of business engagement at these events but this is now growing through recent engagement by WVEN members at the event held in 2016 and it is hoped this will be replicated for 2017. This is beneficial as it encourages visitor interest in Wirral's heritage as well as visitor spend for WVEN members' businesses.

Through discussions with the Heritage Officer, one of the key challenges is to give greater prominence to heritage in literature and campaigns. The Heritage Open Day brochure now includes information on which buildings are open to the public outside of the actual Heritage Open Days. The brochure is distributed to 80 different outlets (10,000 copies printed), including Chester and Liverpool tourist centres. It is also available online through the 'Visit Wirral' website and on other key national websites. However, it was explained that there is a need to identify other outlets for distribution. It is understood that the Senior Manager for Visitor Economy will be looking at the distribution networks, as for example, part of the Council's membership with Marketing Cheshire does include distribution so some brochures can be distributed through this means.

Panel Members highlighted views brought to their attention from a number of heritage groups that that they are not being promoted as much considering the significant heritage connected with international events across the world. In relation to the Wonders of Wirral brochure, only sites that are paying members of the WVEN are included so Members were concerned that

key non-commercial sites are not being promoted. However, The Review Panel also accepts that it is important for the Council to be able to generate more income and to increase membership. As a result of discussions in the evidence session, there is now a focussed free heritage page in the Wonders of Wirral brochure which also gives a link to the Wirral History and Heritage website. The Review Panel was also informed that work is ongoing with the history and heritage groups to help them promote their activities and events in the 'Whats on' section of the Wirral View publication and website.

Members heard from the Heritage Officer that there should be a closer working relationship with existing community partners and to fully support the invaluable contribution made by volunteers which underpins much of the heritage activity. This is a priority as it was explained that most of the heritage activity in Wirral is delivered by volunteers, including Birkenhead Priory, which is developing volunteer networks. There is also reliance on local history societies and local people who provide all input into programmes delivered by the Council. It was highlighted that a large number of volunteer groups have an ageing membership and are not as active. There is therefore a need to increase volunteer activity as there will be reliance on them in the future. The Review Panel was also made aware of concerns from some heritage groups that they do not feel valued and appreciated by the Council with the work that they carry out.

The Review Panel agreed that Wirral could do more to understand the work of volunteers to enable the appropriate support to be identified and provided, where feasible. This includes taking advantage of social media and highlighting opportunities available through Wirral's own media to promote events, such as Wirral View. Members considered that this could be achieved through the delivery of workshop sessions led by officers and a representative from a heritage group for those volunteers involved in heritage. The Review Panel supported a suggestion made by the Strategic Commissioner for Growth that the Wirral Chamber of Commerce could be invited to help deliver social media training as well as assisting in the volunteering side of the session with a link to their volunteering strategy. The Review Panel also sees an opportunity to engage with Wirral Metropolitan College on delivering a Welcome Host session as part of a wider workshop session. Part of the Welcome Host training is about improving local knowledge of tourism which would better inform volunteers on Wirral's assets enabling them to advise visitors and promote Wirral when they are volunteering at events.

Recommendation 1

Wirral Council should engage with relevant stakeholders to develop and deliver workshop sessions for the benefit of Wirral's volunteer groups. The objectives of these sessions should include:

- *Understanding the role of volunteers and how they could be supported more, where feasible;*
- *Providing advice and guidance on using social media and the opportunities available through Wirral Council media and other marketing opportunities to promote events; and*
- *Delivering 'Welcome Host' training through Wirral Metropolitan College.*

5.5. Developing Wirral's Cultural Offer

The Review Panel acknowledged that the WVEN vision is to promote Wirral as a 'hidden gem' but also highlighted the importance of culture and creativity as part of Wirral's tourism offer. The research study carried out in 2011 highlighted that 78% of potential visitors considered

culture to be an important factor. The Review Panel agreed that Wirral's cultural offer has never been fully explored and developed. A Panel Member's observations from working in this area was that other authorities, such as Liverpool and Nottingham have a more developed cultural offer but also have the benefit of being large cities with significant additional resources to enable strategic delivery on culture. Barrow-in-Furness-Council is also reported to have long committed to supporting a wide range of creative and cultural organisations, businesses and initiatives and developing strong relationship with the Arts Council to attract funding. Blackpool was also used as a positive example which, through undertaking major projects, recognised how culture and creativity can support economic growth, including visitor economy.

The Review Panel and officers agreed that Wirral could learn from Liverpool being awarded Capital of Culture by embedding culture and creativity within its tourism offer which transformed many areas within Liverpool. The Review Panel believe that this is what Wirral should be aiming for as part of the Council's 2020 vision. The Strategic Commissioner for Growth and Members of the Review Panel agreed that tourism should not be looked at on its own but as part of an integrated offer.

The Review Panel is assured that the Council is now moving in the right direction with the drive to integrate the Council's Culture Strategy with tourism, leisure and growth. The Review Panel understands that the newly created Cultural Strategy Group will be driven by the Council but delivered externally by those who have a track record in delivering around a cultural agenda. A cultural partnership forum will also exist for smaller organisations and artists as a place to share within a network. If this is implemented successfully, it will help develop Wirral's cultural offer and may also attract more support from the Arts Council for funding which has not been as successful as other local authorities.

The Review Panel believes that supporting Wirral's creative entrepreneurs should be considered to help build on Wirral's cultural offer. However, the Strategic Commissioner for Growth identified a lack of an entrepreneurial community in Wirral. Despite having the assets and spaces, there is no clear strategy to develop this sector. The Strategic Commissioner for Growth identified the issue facing Wirral is that many of the Wirral based creative entrepreneurs are moving to Liverpool when the opportunities to enable them to develop their skills in Wirral should be made available. This is a complex area and as part of the Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the year, a separate Task & Finish review on supporting the creative sector was agreed.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recognises the importance of Wirral's cultural offer as part of developing the Council's Tourism Strategy. The Review Panel therefore fully supports the drive to integrate culture with tourism, leisure and growth through the relevant strategies and that this commitment is maintained by the Council going forward to enable a more developed tourism offer.

The Review Panel considered the success of the Giants which drew tens of thousands of people to Liverpool in 2014 as part of the display commemorating the centenary of the outbreak of World War One. This was part of a year-long programme of major cultural events. As the Giants are scheduled to return to Liverpool in 2018, Members see this as an opportunity to take advantage of Liverpool's programme of events and develop a complementary programme of activity that raises the profile of Wirral and its own cultural heritage. This could include showcasing Wirral's fantastic ship building history, such as

developing a pop up museum through involvement with Cammell Laird, taking advantage of Wirral's waterfront and heritage assets and promoting Wirral's unique food offer and river views through pop up bars and restaurants. To help develop a programme of activities, the Review Panel consider that this is an opportunity for the LEP to be consulted to assist Wirral.

Recommendation 3

A strategy should be developed to enable Wirral to take advantage of the return of the Giants in 2018 and deliver a programme of activity that will raise the profile of Wirral. This should align to the Cultural Steering Group and emerging Tourism Strategy.

5.6 Birkenhead Market

During an evidence session, the Review Panel discussed the potential of Birkenhead Market as a key feature for developing its tourism offer. Although Members recognised that it does not have the same draw for visitors as St. John's Market in Liverpool, that there is now a potential opportunity to consider an alternative use for it with the regeneration of Birkenhead. The Review Panel considered the Time Out Market in Lisbon as a particular example of how a market can improve its tourism offer. Lisbon's Time Out Market hosts small restaurants and artisan kiosks from chefs offering local specialities and international cuisine and has become a top tourist attraction. The Review Panel acknowledges that the negative perception of Birkenhead is an issue and this links to the Growth Plan workstream around the promotion of Birkenhead as an investment location. It was agreed by Members and the Strategic Commissioner for Growth that if Wirral Council wants Birkenhead to be a market town, the Council should take a leadership role in ensuring that the market plays a key role in the developments within the core Town Centre.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that Birkenhead Market should be a key feature in the regeneration of Birkenhead and linked to the emerging strategic framework for Birkenhead.

5.7 Merseytravel and Transport Links

The Review Panel recognises that transportation is an integral part of the tourism industry and good transportation links tourists with various tourist attractions. The Review Panel acknowledge that Wirral needs to improve in this respect as the tourism offer is spread across the whole of Wirral. This should be helped in part by the Wirral Waters Street Car project which would provide a light rail system connecting key attractions along the river front. The review Panel discussed the perception of Merseyrail as an unreliable diesel service where METRO or 'Underground' sounds much more reliable. However, there is a chance to address this with the new rolling stock replacement and the Council remaining engaged with Merseytravel. There is also a need for consideration to having routes to key tourist destinations and introducing travel cards / smartcards to enable visitors to get more value out of travelling around Wirral but this is an issue that needs to be addressed through the Liverpool City Region.

Recommendation 5

Wirral Council should ensure strategic conversations are held with Merseytravel to consider all issues relating to improving transport across Wirral. These should be linked to the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy for Birkenhead and wider Wirral which should address some of these issues.

Appendix 1 - Scoping Document

Review Title: Tourism

Date: March 2016

1. Contact Information:	
Panel Members: Councillors: Jerry Williams (Chair) Adam Sykes Jean Stapleton Christine Spriggs	Key Officers: Juggy Landay – (Senior Manager – Visitor Economy) juggylanday@wirral.gov.uk
2. Review Aims:	
Wirral Plan Pledge/s: Vibrant Tourism Economy Review Objectives The panel agreed that the objective of the scrutiny review would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To review how Wirral's tourism offer, including heritage, is marketed and to identify any gaps that can be exploited;• To understand the role of the local Enterprise Partnership and to ensure that all opportunities for marketing of tourism is taken. Scrutiny Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assurance is provided that marketing and promotion of Wirral's tourism/heritage assets is effective• That the Scrutiny work supports the Council in delivering the Council's Tourism pledge as part of the Wirral Plan.	
3. Review Plan	
Review Approach: Workshop, Evidence Day, Task and Finish? Task & Finish Review Duration: It is proposed that a number of evidence sessions will be undertaken with key Council officers and external stakeholders. It is expected that the review will take 9 months. Scheduled Committee Report Date: Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 24 th January 2017 Scheduled Cabinet Report Date: To be confirmed following report referral to Committee.	

4. Sources of Evidence:

Key Witnesses:

Strategic Commissioner – Growth

Head of Visitor Economy – Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership

Heritage Officer – Wirral Council

Supporting Papers / Documentation:

- Relevant Committee Reports
- Visitor Economy Team marketing activity – Background paper
- Benchmarking Information on other similar local authorities
- Overview of LCRCA Local Enterprise Partnership visitor economy

Involvement of service users / public:

Not applicable at this stage

5. Key Communications:

Cabinet Member:

The Scope document will be shared with the relevant portfolio holder at the start of the review.

Press Office:

- The Council's Press Office will be notified of the review
- The final report will be referred to the Council's press office for information

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BUSINESS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24TH JANUARY 2017

REPORT TITLE	Update on Liverpool City Region developments
REPORT OF	Rose Boylan, Policy & Strategy Manager

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out a brief overview of latest developments at the Liverpool City Region (LCR), including the outcome of the recent Governance review, and activity underway to implement the City Region devolution deal.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee is requested to note and comment on latest developments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee have requested regular updates and consideration of City Region developments.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 N/a

3.0 LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

3.1. Combined Authority Governance Review

In December 2016, Wirral and the other City Region Local Authorities, and the LCR Combined Authority agreed the final legal and governance requirements to establish the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Mayoral Model with the devolved powers and functions agreed as part of the Devolution Deal in November 2015.

A review of the LCR CA constitution is underway, and a revised constitution will be circulated imminently to fully reflect the powers and functions contained within the LCR Order and other generic Orders applicable to the CA, together with how they will be implemented. Details and timescales for the Mayoral Elections are currently being finalised and will be circulated to members shortly.

3.2. Ongoing Delivery

Delivery and implementation continues to progress an extensive range of activity. Examples include:

(i) Business Rates Pilot

The LCR is working to pilot a local government finance system based on retention of 100% of Business Rates income. The objective of the pilot is to test the system being designed to enable 100% rates retention and to test the potential for additional responsibilities to be devolved to local government as part of that system. Details of retention and redistribution mechanisms are currently being negotiated with DCLG.

(ii) Single Investment Fund

The devolution deal secured a commitment to establish a Single Investment Fund (SIF) for the City Region. The SIF brings together local and national funds with those secured through devolution and over the next five years it will invest over £250 million in the City Region. The fund will help to deliver the City Region's targets for growth and secure long-term prosperity for residents and businesses.

The SIF will be invested, in particular, in projects that generate a return so that resources can be recycled to deliver more benefits for the City Region. The recently published Single Growth Strategy 'Building Our Future' provides the framework to guide investment decisions with a focus on business development, research and development, innovation, skills, infrastructure and homes ie 'Productivity, People, Place'.

Link to full document <https://www.liverpoollep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/SGS-SUMMARY-final-low-res.pdf>

(iii) Skills

The CA has just launched the latest round of the Single Investment Fund to invite investment proposals under the single theme of Skills Capital. Meeting the skills needs of employers is a priority for economic growth and a compelling argument for skills capital investments. Skills are an enabler to drive productivity, increase competitiveness and stimulate the creation of new jobs. Delivering the right balance and mix of high quality provision (including access to specialist centres) with good building conditions, efficient estates and up to date machinery that can better respond to employer demands is essential to unlocking local potential and accelerating growth.

(iii) Transport

New Merseyrail trains by 2020: The Merseyrail network is set to get brand new trains after the Combined Authority agreed the £460m project in December 2016. The trains will be built and maintained by Swiss manufacturer, Stadler, subject to a final legal process and the signing of the contracts in the New Year. The CA reports that the new trains will be safer - in terms of the ease in which everyone can get on and off, and will also make Merseyrail one of the most accessible networks in the country. The trains will be able to carry 60% more passengers, will cut journey times by 10%, and will have the capabilities to eventually run beyond the current Merseyrail boundaries to places like Skelmersdale, Wrexham and Warrington.

The CA states that the trains, which will not result in any additional fare increases or council tax rises, will be publically owned by Merseytravel, meaning that they can be designed specifically to suit the network.

Bus Alliance: Partners including Merseytravel, Arriva and Stagecoach recently signed an agreement to improve bus services across the City Region, making the bus network more attractive, affordable and accessible, and supporting the regional economy. The 'Bus Alliance' brings the operators and partners together under a framework to deliver more than £25m worth of investment in bus services in year one of the five-year partnership.

The LCR is also calling on Government to push through the Buses Bill in Parliament. It follows the recent Transport Select Committee report which concluded that the Bus Services Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, provides a major opportunity to transform passengers' experiences of bus services. The Bill will automatically give Mayoral Combined Authorities powers that will allow for greater control and influence over their networks, with different options available on how to do this from full franchising to enhanced partnerships with operators. This power is a fundamental element of the Liverpool City Region's Devolution Deal with government.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Devolution arrangements propose the devolution of resources to City Region.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Council agreed the LCR Order in December 2016. The Constitution of the Combined Authority now requires amendment to reflect the new governance arrangements and the powers and functions set out in the LCR Order. Amendments to the Combined Authority constitution need the unanimous agreement of the CA Constituent members.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

At this time, no additional cost is expected to be incurred by LCR local authorities as a result of the new arrangements to deliver the devolution deal.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Wirral, along with City Region partners, has circulated information and raised awareness of the devolution developments, Governance Review and public consultation through a range of methods.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equality implications associated with this report as it deals with the issue of devolution at a strategic level. Equality analysis will be carried out as part of the detailed implementation as appropriate.

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	12 July 2013
Cabinet	8 August 2013
Cabinet and Council	19 September 2013
Cabinet and Council	10 March 2014
Council	19 November 2015
P&P Regeneration & Environment Committee	18 January 2016
P&P Regeneration & Environment Committee	2 March 2016
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13 September 2016
Council	14 November 2016
Cabinet	8 December 2016
Council	6 December 2016

POLICY INFORM:

Business

Policy Inform- January 2017

The Policy Inform briefings will provide an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament and emerging policies.

The Policy Inform briefings have been produced specifically to inform Portfolio Holders and Elected Members and will be taken to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees for discussion.



CONTENTS

Contents	Page Number
Introduction	3
Queen's Speech 2016- Designation to Policy and Performance Committees	5
Autumn Statement	7
Wirral Plan Business Pledges- Policy and Legislative Developments	11
Greater Job Opportunities in Wirral	11
Workforce Skills Match Business Need	14
Increase Inward Investment	16
Thriving Small Businesses	18
Vibrant Tourism Economy	22
Transport and Technology Fit for the Future	24
Assets and Building are Fit for Purpose	32
Sources	35

INTRODUCTION

The Wirral Plan:

A 2020 Vision which sets out a shared partnership approach to improve outcomes for Wirral residents.

The Plan focuses on three key theme areas:



The Wirral Plan Business Theme states:

"Wirral is a place where employers want to invest and businesses thrive."

Business Policy Briefing:

This policy briefing focuses specifically on policies and legislation relating to the Business Theme and is intended to provide Members of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the latest position on emerging policy and legislative developments to support the committees work programme and future scrutiny work.

The following table outlines the timetable for the preparation and reporting of policy briefing papers:

Overview & Scrutiny Briefings	
July 2016	The first policy briefing focused predominately on the Queen's Speech, which will establish the Government's legislative programme for the parliamentary year ahead.
September 2016	The second policy briefing was produced in September; it will provide an update on policy and legislation and will focus on Wirral Implications relevant to the government's programme of legislation as outlined in the previous policy briefing.

January 2017	The third policy briefing will focus on the Autumn Statement which sets out how Government money will be allocated. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.
May 2017	The fourth policy briefing will focus upon the 2017 Chancellor of Exchequers Budget. The policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.

The January policy briefing focuses on the key announcements from the Autumn Statement and provides an update on policy and legislative developments that have been aligned to the Wirral Plan pledges.

The Committee may wish to identify specific policy areas to focus upon which are in line with the Committee's work programme. Detailed briefing papers can be prepared for these subject matters at the request of the Committee which would be in addition to the regular policy briefing papers outlined above.

QUEEN'S SPEECH 2016 – DESIGNATION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

On Wednesday 18th May 2016, the Queens Speech was delivered, outlining the Government's programme of legislation and policies for the coming year.

Below is a list of each individual Bill that will have implications for local government that was announced during the speech, including those Bills carried over from the 2015-16 session. The list identifies the Overview and Scrutiny Committee remit that the legislation most closely aligns:

Legislative Plans	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Prison and Courts Reform Bill	Environment
Investigatory Powers Bill	Environment
Policing and Crime Bill	People and Environment
Soft Drinks Industry Levy	People and Environment
Lifetime Savings Bill	People and Environment
Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill	Business and Environment
Children and Social Work Bill	People
Education for All Bill	People
Higher Education and Research Bill	People
National Citizen Service Bill	People
Finance Bill	People and Business
Bus Services Bill	Business
Local Growth and Jobs Bill	Business
Digital Economy Bill	Business
Modern Transport Bill	Business
High Speed Rail Bill	Business
Better Markets Bill	Business

Additional Bills that have been announced are outlined below. These will be monitored in relation to any emerging implications for Local Government and reported to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

Additional Legislative Plans
Wales Bill
Bill of Rights
Criminal Finances Bill
Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill
Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill
Small Charitable Donations Bill
NHS (Overseas Visitors Charging) Bill

The Bills relevant to the Business priority are discussed in further detail in this paper.

AUTUMN STATEMENT

'The Autumn Statement prioritises investment to improve productivity and ultimately living standards.' Gov.uk

Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond delivered his first Autumn Statement to the House of Commons on the 23rd November 2016; setting out the new administration's spending plans and priorities for the coming year.

The key announcement themes relevant to local government include:



The Chancellor did not mention, or offer clarity to local government in relation to the following within the Autumn Statement:

- About the role of local government in allocating and spending the National Productivity Investment Fund.
- About devolution beyond the major cities.
- About funding for social care.
- About how business rate retention is going to work and how local government will be financed in the medium to long term.

KEY ANNOUNCEMENT THEMES:

Local Government	Tax	Devolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.8bn will be provided to England regions from the Local Growth Fund. • The government will give mayoral combined authorities powers to borrow for their new functions, subject to agreeing a borrowing cap with HM Treasury. • The government will also consult on lending local authorities up to £1 billion at a new local infrastructure rate of gilts + 60 basis points for three years to support infrastructure projects that are high value for money. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote 'simplicity' within the tax system, the government intends to move towards having a single major fiscal event each year. • Following the spring 2017 Budget and Finance Bill, Budgets will be delivered in the autumn. • Personal tax free allowance will go up to £12,500 by end of Parliament. • The taper rate at which Universal Credit is withdrawn as earnings rise to be reduced from 65p to 63p from April. • Tax savings on salary sacrifice and benefits in kind to be stopped, with exceptions for ultra-low emission cars, pensions, childcare and cycling. • Employee and employer National Insurance thresholds to be equalised at £157 per week from April 2017. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government has published a strategy setting out an overall approach to building the Northern Powerhouse. • The British Business Bank will make its first investments from the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund in early 2017, to support local SMEs. • The government remains committed to devolving powers to support local areas. • The government will begin talks on future transport funding with Greater Manchester. • The government will transfer to Greater Manchester the budget for the Work and Health programme, subject to certain conditions. • The government will award £1.8bn to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) across England through a third round of Growth Deals. • £556 million of this funding will go to the North of England. Awards to individual LEPs will be announced in the coming months.



Vulnerable

- No plans for welfare savings measures in this parliament beyond those already announced.
- The government will shortly publish a consultation on options to tackle pension scams.
- Government commitment to a further £10 million over two years to the Rough Sleeping Fund.
- Support for refugees – refugees and their family members will be exempted from the Past Presence Test



Childcare

- Tax-Free Childcare will be introduced gradually from early 2017, with roll out beginning upon completion of the trial. The government will review its operation to assess the benefit it is delivering for working parents.



Housing

- £2.3bn in new Housing Infrastructure Fund to help provide 100,000 new homes in 'high-demand areas'. Allocated to local government on a competitive basis, will provide infrastructure targeted at unlocking new private house building.
- £1.4bn will be made available to deliver 40,000 extra affordable homes.
- Restrictions on government grant relaxed to allow providers to deliver a wider range of housing types.



Transport

- £23bn national productivity investment fund over five years.
- £1.1bn extra investment in English local transport networks.
- £390m investment in low emission vehicles and the development of connected autonomous vehicles. To "build on our competitive advantage" in these areas.
- £450m investment to trial of digital signalling on railways. Aim to achieve a 'step-change' in reliability.
- The government will invest £100 million to improve the resilience of roads to flooding.
- The government will invest £50 million for rail resilience projects to flooding.
- £80 million will be allocated to accelerate the rollout of smart ticketing including season tickets for commuters in the UK's major cities.



Leisure and Culture

- The government will support a Royal Society of the Arts pilot to promote cultural education in schools.
- £7.6 million will be provided for urgent repairs at Wentworth Woodhouse country house in Rotherham.
- The Autumn Statement confirms the government's contribution of up to £15 million towards the costs of hosting the 2021 Rugby League World Cup, and £10 million towards legacy infrastructure.



Business

- Additional funding will be allocated to increase research capacity and business innovation.
- The statement announces a reduction in business rates by £6.7 billion over the next 5 years.
- National Living Wage will increase from £7.20 to £7.50 in April 2017.
- To remove inconsistency between rural rate relief and small business rate relief the government will double rural rate relief to 100% from April 2017.



Digital

- The government will invest over £1 billion by 2020-21, including £740 million through the NPIF.
- £400 million of this for a new Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund, at least matched by private finance, to invest in new fibre networks over the next 4 years.
- 100% business rates relief for new full-fibre infrastructure for a 5 year period from 1 April 2017 to support roll out to more homes and businesses.
- This is targeted at supporting roll out of full-fibre connections and future 5G connections.



Research

- The government has selected 8 areas for the second wave of Science and Innovation Audits, including: Liverpool City Region and the Bioeconomy of the North of England.



Productivity

- National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) announced targeting four areas: Housing; Transport; Digital communications and Research and development.
- The NPIF will provide for £23 billion of spending between 2017-18 and 2021-22.
- The NPIF will take total spending on housing, economic infrastructure and R&D to £170 billion over the next 5 years.

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR OUR PARTNERS:

NHS	Police & Justice	Schools and Apprenticeships
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An additional student loan outlay allows the government to fund up to 1,500 additional medical training places each year, from the 2018-19 academic year onwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The government will provide up to £500 million of additional funding across the period to the Ministry of Justice. This will enable the recruitment of 2,500 more prison officers to improve prison safety. It will also fund wider reforms to the justice system.• Ministry of Justice will reduce the 'unacceptably high' number of whiplash claims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government will provide £50 million of new capital funding to support the expansion of existing grammar schools. This has been budgeted for 2017-18 through to 2020-2021.• Proposals for further reforms set out in the consultation document 'Schools that Work for Everyone.'

IMPACT ON WIRRAL:

- Departmental spending plans set out in the 2015 Spending Review to remain in place. This implies that the Councils projections are in line with what the Government has already announced. However further details on the local government finance settlement including schools have yet to be released, although it is known that 97% of Councils including Wirral have accepted the Four year funding offer. The Government has made a commitment to protect budgets for key public services, defence, overseas aid and the pension "triple lock" until the end of this Parliament.
- There have been no announcements on further funding for social care or the NHS whether through the Better Care Fund or the Council Tax Precept despite the pressures in these areas being highlighted prior to the Statement's announcement.
- The Statement includes details on investment in roads infrastructure but the amount that may come to Wirral is not yet known.
- The Statement includes details on housing infrastructure and affordable housing but the amount that may come to Wirral is not yet known.
- The Living Wage is set to increase from £7.20 per week to £7.50 per week. This is in line with the previous announced level of increase. The Council has factored into its budget projections increases in the living wage.
- High level figures have been announced for the Growth Fund including LEP however there are no details for the LCR announced yet.
- The change in the Universal Credit taper reducing from 65% to 63%
- Further details will be made by the various government departments over the coming weeks.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE AUTUMN STATEMENT ON THE NORTH WEST:

- The Government's Northern Powerhouse (NPH) strategy reaffirmed commitments to the NPH including:
 - £13bn for transport in the North over the course of this Parliament;
 - £70 million for the Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy;
 - £60m development funding for Northern Powerhouse Rail; and
 - A number of investments in Greater Manchester including the £235 million to the Sir Henry Royce Institute, £78 million for the Factory theatre and £38 million for the National Graphene Institute.
- The Chancellor announced that £556 million of the total £1.8 billion fund available for Growth Deals to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will go to the North of England: the allocation for individual LEPs will be announced in the next few weeks.
- The Government has committed to giving mayoral combined authorities such as Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region powers to borrow for their new functions allowing them to invest in economically productive infrastructure, subject to agreeing a borrowing cap with HM Treasury.
- The government has also selected eight areas for the second wave of Science and Innovation Audits, aimed at boosting economic growth in the knowledge sector. Liverpool City Region was one of the successful areas and its audit will exploit synergies and identify collaborations, investments and interventions to strengthen and attract businesses.
- It is estimated that at least 134,300 people in the North West stand to gain from the decision to increase the national living wage from £7.20 to £7.50.
- The reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 65% to 63% could potentially affect a substantial number of the 37,700 people in work who receive Universal Credit in the North West.
- The budget for the forthcoming national Work and Health Programme will be devolved to Greater Manchester. The government will also begin talks on future transport funding.
- Documents published alongside the Autumn statement confirm major new investments in the region's roads:
 - A66 Penrith to Scotch Corner will be duelled;
 - Improvements will be made to the M60 North West quadrant;
 - Connectivity between Sheffield and Manchester will be improved; and
 - Four Northern transport projects were awarded business case developmental funding from the Local Majors Fund, including the Warrington Waterfront western link.

WIRRAL PLAN BUSINESS PLEDGES- POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

GREATER JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN WIRRAL

We will provide an increase in the number and range of jobs in Wirral so all our residents can find employment opportunities.

Our Pledge Ambition:

To make progress towards this goal we will see the creation and safeguarding of 5000 jobs by 2020. We will also seek to increase the number of employers who pay the living wage and will work with partners and others to reduce unemployment and improve access to skills. We will encourage more young people into work who are currently not in employment, education or training.

Outcome Strategy:

1. Ensure that residents furthest away from work have the right support to access employment
2. Build growth in target sectors such as energy and advanced manufacturing
3. Work with the Combined Authority (CA) to co-design and then co-commission with DWP the future employment support for harder to reach claimants
4. Work with the CA to identify strategic employment sites for inclusion in the proposed single city region framework



Associated Legislation:

Unpaid Work Experience (Prohibition) Bill

Reporting stage: Received its first reading in the House of Lords on the 7th June 2016. A date for its second reading is yet to be announced

The purpose of the Bill is to: To make provision for the prohibition of unpaid work experience exceeding four weeks and for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so far: There is concern in both Houses that banning unpaid internships could reduce the opportunities for young people to gain valuable work experience. Additionally, it is unclear what effect this bill would have on volunteering and other employment law if it were to achieve royal assent.

Associated Legislation:

Workers' Rights (Maintenance of EU Standards) Bill

Reporting stage: The first reading in the House of Commons occurred on the 7th September 2016. The second reading is scheduled for 13th January 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to: Make provision about the safeguarding of workers' rights derived from European Union legislation after the withdrawal of the UK from the EU; and for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so far: The EU currently ensures UK workers have the right to annual leave, daily rest breaks, the right to equal treatment for agency workers after 12 weeks service, and protection against unfair dismissal upon a transfer of undertakings, according to research by the House of Commons Library. However, the current Business Minister Margot James declined to give a clear answer as to whether she would safeguard these rights, stating only that, 'Employment protections are a priority for this government'.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Delivering value through the apprenticeships programme

LGiU, 28/11/2016

Summary- A report from the National Audit Office, aiming to inform and evaluate the Government's programme of apprenticeship reform, followed a recent announcement of an apprentice levy being introduced in spring 2017. The levy requires all employers operating in the UK, with a pay bill over £3 million each year, to invest in apprenticeships. It warns of "a clear risk that the drive to deliver greater numbers is delivered at the expense of delivering maximum value".

Brief Analysis-

As part of its work to tackle this 'productivity gap', the government is radically overhauling the apprenticeship system in England, expanding its role as a route into skilled, long-term employment. Increased funding led to over two million people beginning apprenticeships between 2010 and 2015. The government has committed to delivering a further three million starts before 2020.

The NAO's Auditor General, Amyas Morse, concludes: "The DfE needs to chart and follow a course from having a lot of apprenticeships to having the right apprenticeships in order to help improve the UK's productivity, and achieve value for money, in return for the costs of the programme."

The report also notes that the Office for National Statistics has estimated that the UK is about a third less productive than Germany, France and the USA. This gap is the widest it has been since records began in 1991. Thus, in the context of Brexit and the forthcoming rounds of trade renegotiations, the success or otherwise of the government's apprenticeship reforms has come to be more significant.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Apprenticeship Funding

[GOV.UK, 25/10/2016](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/apprenticeship-funding-announced)

Summary – The Government has announced plans due to come in to effect in May 2017 to fund new apprenticeships to help address the skills shortage in the UK. The main measures announced by the Government were:

- 100% of training costs will be paid by Government for employers with fewer than 50 employees who take on apprentices aged 16-18 years old. This will also apply to smaller employers who take on 19-24 year olds who were in care or have an education and health care plan.
- £1,000 each from government to employers and training providers who take on 16-18 year olds and 19-24 year olds who were in care or have an education and health care plan.
- More than £60 million will be invested in supporting the training of apprentices from the poorest areas in the country, equaling around one third of all apprentices.

Brief Analysis – Concerns have been raised about the new plans as they do not address the quality of training given; and is merely focused on the quantity of apprenticeships. However, the plans aim to simplify the apprenticeship funding model for small and medium sized businesses and the government are aiming to have 3 million extra apprenticeship places by 2020.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

The Apprenticeship Levy

The Apprenticeship Levy will come into effect from 6th April 2017. The Levy is applicable to all employers, including public sector organisations. The Levy links to the Greater Job Opportunities for All Pledge & Workforce Skills Match Business Needs Pledge. There are a number of concerns associated with the Levy:

- The increase of apprenticeships is a significant growth bid
- Numbers are significant as they are based on headcount (178 = identified no. of apprentices based on headcount)
- The commitment to the Living Wage as an employer may be an issue for Partners
- The residual Council in three years' time will have fewer opportunities for apprenticeship training in work type.

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

Work, Health and Disability

The Department for Work and Pensions is currently seeking views on what it will take to transform employment prospects for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. They would like to understand why disabled people and people with health conditions might be unable to get a job or keep one, and to recognise the wide range of conditions and circumstances they face.

The consultation closes 17th February 2017 at 11:45pm. More Information can be found [here](#).

WORKFORCE SKILLS MATCH BUSINESS NEEDS

To meet the needs of local businesses and attract those interested in investing in Wirral we must develop an appropriately skilled workforce that meets the needs of businesses for the future

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will work with our partners in education and training to closely align the provision of training offered with the skills businesses will need to develop the borough. We will measure and close this skills gap by 2020.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral's Growth Strategy- 1. Greater job opportunities in Wirral 2. Workforce skills match business needs 3. Increase inward investment 4. Vibrant tourism economy



Associated Legislation:

Technical and Further Education Bill

Reporting Stage: The Bill had its Second Reading debate on Monday 14 November. This Bill has now been committed to a Public Bill Committee where it will be scrutinised in more detail. The Public Bill Committee is expected to report to the House by Tuesday 6 December 2016.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

Take forward the government's ambition to streamline technical education to ensure clear routes into skill employment. These reforms will put employers at the heart of the skills system, enabling them to drive the skills they need and value the most. Also commits to create 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020.

Concerns and progress so far:

Supporting individuals to a lifetime of sustained skilled employment will not only help to boost productivity and growth of economy but also deliver on Government's vision for an economy that works for all. Measures in the Bill build on progress the Government has already made by investing in high quality apprenticeships and they deliver against the commitments the Government made in the Post-16 Skills Plan. This provides the plan on how to boost the county's productivity by addressing skills shortages and ensuring high quality technical education.

Associated Emerging Policy:

The skills we need, and why we don't have them

Policy Exchange, 11/11/2016

Summary- New report by leading think tank Policy Exchange urges the government to put in place a high level quality target alongside its existing commitment to create 3 million new apprenticeship starts by 2020.

Brief Analysis-

Suggests the skills agenda – and specifically, the government's flagship programme of Apprenticeships can be key to achieving social mobility. The best vehicle for social mobility is a high quality education.

In particular, a high quality further education and skills system offers a route other than the academic one to those who might benefit from it, improving their own life chances.

The report also details the skills needed in the North West:

- Skill needs focused on 4 areas: low carbon, making Liverpool a 'super port'; tourism and leisure; and a 'knowledge quarter including growth of pharma, material sciences, advance manufacturing and healthcare.
- Large number of small and medium enterprises (82 in Liverpool alone).
- Significant gap in basic skills between the North West and nationally which also needs to be addressed.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Technical and Further Education Bill

The Bill affects FE Colleges, Sixth Form College and post 16 Apprenticeships in the Wirral. The Bill will extend the remit of the new "Institute for Apprenticeships" to cover college-based technical education in addition to apprenticeships, and to rename it accordingly as the "Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education". The Institute will become operational in April 2017 and will then formally take on responsibility for technical education in April 2018.

The Bill will also establish an insolvency framework, with procedures for colleges broadly in line with companies under the Insolvency Act 1986. Most importantly, it will include a Special Administration Regime which will protect learners by avoiding or minimising disruption to the studies of the existing students of the FE body.

INCREASED INWARD INVESTMENT

To continue to grow our economy we have to identify local, national and international opportunities to bring more investment into Wirral.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will increase the borough's gross value added at a faster rate than the regional average and commit to securing £250 million of Private sector investment.

Outcome Strategy:

We will have a clear focus on key growth sectors and aim to become a world class location for investment in those sectors, taking advantage of having one of the UK's strongest small business sectors and our unique geographical position at the Western gateway to UK and Europe.



Associated Legislation:

Local Growth and Jobs Bill

Reporting stage: This Bill has yet to have its First Reading in either House and no announcement has been made as to when this might occur.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Grow the economy by giving local councils an incentive to support business and develop their local economy.
- To allow local authorities to retain 100% of their business rates
- To give local councils the power to cut business rates for local firms
- To give combined authority mayors the power to add a supplement on business rates bills to fund new infrastructure projects.

Concerns and progress so far: A potential problem is widening regional inequality, where areas that are less well-off and have fewer thriving businesses end up receiving lower business rates than their wealthier counterparts. The Bill restricts the government's ability to redistribute resources to poorer local authorities.

Associated Legislation:

Economic Strategy Bill

Reporting stage: The First reading occurred 14th June 2016 in the House of Lords. The date for the second reading is yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to: make provision for the support of the United Kingdom's business sector; and the development of an industrial and retail strategy.

Concerns and progress so far:

If Royal Assent is achieved, the Bill would require the Secretary of State to consult with the Business sector to identify changes affecting businesses and the economy that pose a risk to the future prosperity of businesses and employees in the UK.

Within six months of the day on which this Act is passed, and once in each subsequent 12 month period, the Secretary of State must publish, and lay before both Houses of Parliament, a report on a strategy to support the industry and retail sectors in the UK.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Local Growth and Jobs Bill

The LGA have welcomed the Local Growth and Jobs Bill, stating that they have been campaigning for councils keeping 100 percent of its business rates income for years. They say the Bill offers local communities and businesses huge potential in the face of disappearing government grants. The Bill has also been welcomed thanks to its provision for the reform of the business rates appeal process. Over the last 3 years councils have had to divert £1.75 billion away from stretched local services in order to cover the risk of such appeals from almost 900,000 businesses, something which the LGA says is further hindering councils from protecting key services.

Economic Strategy Bill

The Economic Strategy Bill [HL] has yet to publish its specificities, but following its second reading (date to be announced) Wirral-specific implications will be recorded.

THRIVING SMALL BUSINESSES

Our economy is also supported by entrepreneurs and small businesses

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will work with our partners and other community groups to deliver net additional 250 new businesses in Wirral over the coming five years. We will make it easier for our small businesses to grow and will work to improve local high streets and our town centre economy.

Outcome Strategy – Growth Plan:

1. Create a more dynamic and growth focused business population; 2. Raise the level of business starts; 3. Increase growth aspiration, skills and competence among business leaders; 4. Improve productivity and competitiveness; 5. Encourage diversification into emerging markets; 6. Increase the scale of export activity and the number of businesses that export their goods and services; 7. Promote supply chain development activity in key sectors.



Associated Legislation:

Finance Act 2016

Reporting stage: The Bill received Royal Assent on Thursday 15th September 2016.

The purpose of the Bill is to: The Finance act was intended to introduce measures to provide opportunity for families, back British business and tackle multinational tax avoidance.

Concerns and progress so far:

An amendment to the Finance Act 2016 made shortly before royal assent gave the treasury the option to require public country by country (CbC) reporting as part of a group's published tax strategy. It is unclear however whether HMRC could compel non-UK headquartered groups to publish their full CbC report if filed with a tax authority elsewhere. Many businesses may also be concerned at the prospect of publishing potentially commercially sensitive data.

Associated Legislation:

Better Markets Bill

Reporting stage: This Bill has yet to have its First Reading in either House and no announcement has been made as to when this might occur.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Open up markets, boost competition, give consumers more power and choice and make economic regulators work better.

Concerns and progress so far:

The CMA's (Competition and Markets Authority) recommendations for making the energy market more competitive have been criticised. They have abandoned plans for a wide-ranging cap on energy bills and their suggestion for giving energy providers access to more consumer data has led to concerns that people will be bombarded with junk mail as providers compete to give consumers more options.

Associated Emerging Policy:

GREAT.gov.uk Trade Hub

[GOV.UK, 14/11/2016](#)

Summary - The International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox has announced the release of the new 'GREAT.gov.uk' platform that will:

- Give UK businesses secure preferential deals through the Department for International Trade to help them start exporting
- Provide a brand new searchable export directory to match businesses according to the worldwide demand for different UK goods and services

The launch of the GREAT.gov.uk trade hub for businesses will help them access millions of pounds' worth of potential overseas business, give practical advice, and signpost support to help them win lucrative contracts. The site will act as a single digital destination for trade and investment, bringing together and connecting UK businesses, international buyers and international investors. Whether businesses are new, occasional or frequent exporters, they will be able to take advantage of the new suite of tools and exclusive deals on fees or commissions with some of world's leading online marketplaces. By registering, businesses will become part of a brand new searchable directory of UK exporters which government will use to match their products and services with worldwide demand.

Continued

Brief Analysis

Of the 2.5 million businesses registered in the UK, an estimated 360,000 who have an exportable product or service mistakenly believe there isn't a global demand for it.

The government's existing E-exporting programme has assisted over 3,000 companies to become exporters and has delivered export deals totalling £388 million since 2014.

The new digital trade hub is part of a push to help a further 100,000 more UK businesses export by 2020. Through e-exporting alone the government intends to deliver an additional 20,000 online exporters and £2 billion worth of value to the UK economy by 2020.

Businesses will be able to access the best advice and financial support through GREAT.gov.uk from government, from public and private sector business champions, and from GREAT partners, all specifically designed to help them to grow and succeed through exports.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Business Rates Appeal Reform

[GOV.UK, 06/07/2016](#)

Summary – The Department for Communities and Local Government announced in July 2016 changes to the business rates appeal system. The new online service will allow customers to provide information and track progress of their appeal. The new 'check, challenge, appeal' process is designed to prevent speculative appeals, and make sure genuine disputes are settled quickly.

Brief Analysis – The proposed changes to the business rates appeal process are due to come in to effect in April 2017. However, concerns have been raised as to whether the new proposals will in fact make the appeals process more difficult for businesses; particularly SMEs. For example, the new legislation states that appeals must not be 'outside the bounds of reasonable professional judgement'. Many experts expect this to mean valuation inaccuracies of less than 10%; while others suggest this may go as high as 20%. 'Reasonable professional judgement' may also mean that in order to appeal a valuation, a business would have to employ a surveyor; adding additional costs to the process which will likely hit small businesses the hardest.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Finance Act 2016

- Small Business reliefs from Business Rates are to be doubled and expanded in scope for 2017/18.
- The implementation of 100% rates retention, with the concomitant loss of Revenue Support Grant, is to be piloted by the Liverpool City Region, starting in April 2017. Details are expected to be announced in the 2017/18 Local Government Settlement
- National Living Wage increases will have significant effects on Social Care costs for the Council.
- Apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of payroll costs takes effect from April 2017, adding to the Council's direct staff costs.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

GREAT.com Trade Hub

With regards to increasing international trade of Wirral's businesses, Wirral Chamber of Commerce provides direct, practical support to Wirral businesses to enable them to identify and to take advantage of export opportunities.

Better Markets Bill

The Better Markets Bill was announced during the Queen's speech in May 2016 and aims to boost competition and reduce unnecessary burdens on business. It is thought that the Better Markets Bill will have a specific implication on the energy sector, and specially the process of switching suppliers. If passed, the Bill will give consumers more power and choice when choosing energy supplier, and it is hoped that in the long term next-day switching will be brought into force by 2019. This would mean that business is less at the mercy of the suppliers' timelines, reducing their risk of sitting on expensive out of contract rates while waiting for a switch to go through. As the Better Markets Bill is yet to be brought to parliament (the government hope to do so at some point during 2017), details about the Bill and therefore its possible implications on local government are currently mere speculation. But, if the Bill reduces barriers to business growth, it may very well help local authorities raise income through increased business tax revenue which would provide councils with additional income and create jobs for residents in the process as new businesses are set up and existing ones grow.

Business Rates Appeal Reform

Business rates appeal reform has long been called for by council leaders, as they say that the cost implications of such appeals are so huge and coupled with deep cuts in central government funding, the current appeals system hinders local authorities from providing key services to residents. In the last 3 years alone councils have had to set aside £1.75 billion to protect themselves against such appeals- a notable case at present is Virgin Media's appeal against the increasing business rates they pay on their broadband network which they are currently appealing. Business rates appeal reform will therefore have a huge impact on local government, in that costs can be diverted away from appeals towards investing in key, stretched services.

VIBRANT TOURISM ECONOMY

We are proud of our home and we will work to promote and grow the borough's tourism offer, making Wirral a place even more people enjoy visiting.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will review and make best use of our heritage, leisure and cultural assets to drive tourism, the associated creation of jobs and increase revenue for Wirral's visitor economy to £450 million by 2020.

Outcome Strategy:

The Tourism Strategy is currently being developed.



Associated Emerging Policy:

Discover England Fund

[Gov.uk, 16/08/16](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/discover-england-fund)

Summary- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced on the 16th August 2016 a new £40 million fund to boost tourism in the UK, specifically outside of London. It aims to help visitors from abroad as well as Brits holidaying at home to explore the wealth of tourism opportunities across the country.

Brief Analysis- Funding from the Discover England Fund will go on projects that highlight some of the country's great cultural and sporting assets, from music festivals to championship golf courses and our world-class cuisine. Examples of such projects so far are: a self-guided activity app piloted in Cornwall and Cotswolds which will provide visitors with rich content about the area and an easy booking system for attractions and hotels, and Gold Tourism England Limited who have been awarded funding in order to capitalise on the untapped potential of England's golf tourism sector.

The fund is aligned to the government's new Tourism Action Plan announced on the 26th August 2016, which includes a series of new initiatives and measures to help Britain out-compete other major tourism destinations, welcoming more international visitors than ever before and see more "staycations" as Brits increasingly holiday at home. Such initiatives include: a new GREAT tourism rail offer, including five new easy to book rail itineraries to help tourists seamlessly travel around the UK and cutting red tape with sensible regulation by changing licensing rules to allow B&Bs to offer a welcome drink to guests, for example.

Information about how to apply for funding can be found [here](#).

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

Natural England and Natural Resources Wales in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee are currently running an open consultation seeking feedback on proposals to extend the Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area, with the aim of protecting the internationally important populations of common tern, little tern and little gull. This area is particularly important for the terns as much of the sea around their breeding colonies is the ideal habitat for plunge diving for food, and is therefore of great interest to bird watchers. The proposal is also to add cormorant and red-breasted merganser to the waterbird assemblage as named species.

Consultation is open until 8th February 2017 at 5pm, and can be accessed [here](#). Site maps of the protection can be accessed [here](#).

TRANSPORT AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Ensure that Wirral has safe, affordable, well maintained and efficient transport networks for residents to access community services, enjoy our leisure facilities and commute to work.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will use engineering to improve our road networks, to build new cycle routes, improve pedestrian facilities and take advantage of new technology to travel efficiently, safely and sustainably. People will feel confident to change their travel habits and try healthy, environmentally friendly ways of getting around. Residents, business and visitors will know how to get around and where to find information.

In a digital economy we will also complete the deployment of a high speed broadband network for more residents and businesses in Wirral with 98% having access by 2017

Outcome Strategy: Transport

1. Keep traffic moving safely and efficiently
2. Reliable and affordable public transport
3. Encourage healthy active travel
4. Inclusive integrated transport that supports our residents needs

Outcome Strategy: Digital

1. Every resident with the ability and the skills to get the most out of technology to improve their lives
2. Every business benefitting from market-leading technology infrastructure, helping them to open up new markets and compete globally.
3. Every public service is joined up, integrated and available online in a way which makes it simple and accessible to get support online.



Associated Legislation:

Bus Services Bill

Reporting stage: The third reading in the House of Lords is scheduled for 23rd November 2016.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Strengthen arrangements for partnership working in the sector
- Introduce 'enhanced partnerships'. Introduce new franchising powers with decision making at a local level
- Provide for a step change in the information available to bus passengers

Concerns and progress so far:

Clause 21 of the Bus Services Bill initially read as follows:

21 Bus companies: limitation of powers of authorities in England

- (1) A relevant authority may not, in exercise of any of its powers, form a company for the purpose of providing a local service.

However, members of the House of Lords voted to remove clause 21 from the Bill after receiving public criticism. The Clause essentially prevented Local Authorities from setting up and running their own bus companies, and with many currently publicly owned bus companies providing large amounts of revenue for local authority budgets the decision will be welcome news to many councils.

Associated Legislation:

Digital Economy Bill

Reporting stage: The Digital Economy Bill passed through the House of Commons committee stage on the 1st November 2016. The date for the Report Stage is yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- A Bill to make provision about electronic communications infrastructure and services
- To provide for restricting access to online pornography
- To make provision about protection of intellectual property in connection with electronic communications
- To make provision about data-sharing
- To make provision about functions of OFCOM in relation to the BBC
- To provide for determination by the BBC of age-related TV licence fee concessions
- To make provision about the regulation of direct marketing
- To make other provision about OFCOM and its functions; and for connected purposes.

Digital Economy Bill

Concerns and progress so far:

The following amendments were agreed by the House of Commons Public Bill Committee:

- The Bill will now include a specific obligation for providers to fix faults with connections within appropriate timescales.
- The Bill will now allow an end-user to terminate a contract on repeatedly failing to meet a specific standard or obligation; this is currently optional.
- Courses of study for qualifications in IT are free of charge for persons in England aged 19 or over.
- A new clause has been inserted to compel the government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the Universal Service Obligation (USO).
- Suppliers will be obligated to provide consistent upload speeds at a minimum of 2Mbps with the aim of doubling that figure over the next 10 years.

However, Labour's Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy, Louise Haigh, doesn't believe the Bill goes far enough in terms of the USO for broadband (the legal right to every household in the country for 10Mbps by 2020). She believes that by the time the scheme is rolled out the 10Mbps broadband speed will be outdated and leave the UK falling behind in terms of digital infrastructure.

Associated Legislation:

Modern Transport Bill

Reporting stage: Chris Grayling, the new transport secretary, has announced that the Modern Transport Bill will be published in early 2017 to help Britain become a world-leader in autonomous driving technology.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Cut red tape and put the right framework in place to allow innovation to flourish.
- Create the conditions that drive innovation and put the UK at the forefront of modern global transport developments as part of the country's long term economic plan.
- Maintain and extend the UK's role as a world-leading transport manufacturing base.
- Ensure new technology delivers better, safer journeys, while keeping Britain at the cutting edge of international transport technology.

Associated Legislation:

Railways Bill

Reporting stage: This Bill is expected to have its second reading debate in the House of Commons on Friday 20th January 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- A Bill to require the Secretary of State to assume control of passenger rail franchises when they come up for renewal; and for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so far:

Ian Taylor, co-founder of the Transport for Quality of Life think tank, has observed that private sector inefficiencies have led to wastage worth £1 billion a year, enough to cut ticket prices by 20% if railways were nationalised.

However, this Bill is highly unlikely to achieve Royal Assent.

Associated Legislation:

High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill

Reporting stage: The Bill is currently 'House Pending' but according to a report by the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd, Royal Assent should be achieved by December 2016. However, the Date for the Committee debate in the House of Lords is yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Provide the Government with the legal powers to construct and operate Phase One of High Speed 2 (HS2). On becoming an Act, it would give the Government deemed planning permission for the railway between London and the West Midlands.
- This will help deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment to build High Speed 2

Concerns and progress so far:

A new rail franchise combining the current InterCity West Coast main line with HS2 high-speed services has been announced by the government. The new franchise will be called West Coast Partnership and is scheduled to start on 1st April 2019. The operator will be responsible for services on both the West Coast Main Line from 2019 and running of the initial HS2 services in 2026. The contract will run for the first three to five years of HS2's operation.

It is hoped that HS2 will reduce overcrowding on the existing network and generate economic growth across the country. However, critics say the project is too expensive (estimated £55.7bn) and will damage the environment. Furthermore, Mike Cash, general secretary of the RMT, criticised a decision to award the franchise to a private operator after spending such a large amount of taxpayer's money on the project.

Associated Emerging Policy

Rail Passenger Compensation – ‘Delay Repay 15’

[GOV.UK, 13/10/2016](#)

Summary - Rail Passengers will soon be able to claim compensation if their train is more than 15 minutes late under an improved compensation scheme announced on Thursday 13th October 2016. ‘Delay Repay 15’ will be introduced within months on Govia Thameslink Railway services and then subsequently rolled out across the country. Passengers will be able to claim 25% of the cost of the single fare for delays between 15 and 29 minutes. The existing compensation thresholds will apply for delays from 30 minutes with passengers able to apply for compensation through the train operating company.

Brief Analysis – John Larkinson, Director of Railway markets and economics at the Office of Rail and Road found that 80% of passengers currently don’t claim compensation when their trains are delayed. Therefore, unless more can be done to raise awareness of the compensation scheme among passengers and simplify the compensation application process, the ‘Delay Repay 15’ scheme may have very little impact on the reliability of the rail networks.

Associated Emerging Policy:

National Infrastructure Commission

[GOV.UK, 12/10/2016](#)

Summary – The Chancellor Philip Hammond has announced the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) is to become an executive agency which will help plan, prioritise and ensure efficient investment. It will be given its own budget, freedom and autonomy, which are set out in a [charter](#) detailing the government’s commitment to its independence.

Brief Analysis – However, there’s uncertainty about how autonomous the commission will actually be. Executive agencies are managerially separate, but independently accountable within their home department, in this case the Treasury. This means that although the commission will have some power to distribute its funding as it sees fit, the treasury can intervene and stop projects if it wishes.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Bus Services Bill

The Bus Services Bill was discussed at Merseytravel's Committee on the 3rd November in which they noted 'the importance of the Bill to the Liverpool City Region Devolution Deal and welcomes the new devolved powers to significantly improve bus services for passengers, particularly the new powers of a simple route to introduce Bus Franchising.' The Bill will help strengthen the work already being undertaken to establish a Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance and will help to deliver Priority Two of Wirral's Transport Strategy.

Digital Economy Bill

The implications outlined in the previous Policy Inform papers produced in September still remain.

- In addition there are safeguarding implications as the Bill proposes strict new regulations in relation to online pornography. It will force pornographic websites to add age verification checks that won't let people watch videos until they sign up to a special verification programme. New rules will also ban videos from showing a range of 'unusual acts' from being shown on pornographic websites. The LGA has welcomed these measures as a positive step to protect children online.
- A group of experts has raised concerns to the government that the Digital Economy Bill fails to provide enough detail and scrutiny around its data-sharing commitments. They are concerned about data security and the possibility of government agencies and local government sharing data without subjects' knowledge.
- The LGA has asked for a new clause in the Bill to include a reporting function which would compel the Government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the Universal Service Obligation. This is a safeguard that would compel broadband providers to provide fast and reliable speeds, particularly in rural areas.
- The Government's has committed to upskill people with basic digital skills. The LGA has asked that any new training requirements be matched by additional funding from central Government. It has asked that the courses also be locally routed and commissioned. This responsibility may fall to local authorities.
- The LGA has asked that, in order to prevent further digital exclusion, the Government put in place a social tariff, in a similar manner to the telephony USO, for those who would face undue hardship having to pay for broadband services.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Modern Transport Bill

Wirral and the Liverpool City Region have a number of electric vehicle charging points. This Bill will help consumers by identifying the location of charge points and reducing the barriers to utilising different networks through transparent tariffs and Smart charging technology, impacts of the Bill and how it impacts the local network will have to be considered. The Bill will also promote the provision of hydrogen recharging infrastructure, which the Liverpool City Region might investigate the potential of, due to the proximity of hydrogen production in Halton.

Railways Bill

Locally the Bill would not have a significant impact on the Merseyrail network with Merseytravel letting the concession for the network, setting the conditions and terms of contract. Merseytravel's level of control over the local franchise helps to deliver Priority 2 of the Transport Strategy. The Bill could have a larger impact on cross boundary and inter regional travel, for example the Wrexham to Bidston Line which falls under the Wales and Borders passenger services franchise.

High Speed Rail Bill

HS2 will help to reduce journey times to London via Liverpool by approximately 20% on completion of phase 1 with classic compatible trains entering the high speed network near Lichfield. This will enable Wirral to become more competitive by reducing the barrier of accessibility to the region. The completion of Phase 2 of HS2 should also enable extra capacity for passengers and freight on the West Coast Main Line, which will benefit the City Region and in particular the port of Liverpool. The aspirations of the Liverpool City Region are to make a direct link to the HS2 network near to Manchester; this would require a brand new twin track line between Liverpool and Manchester with a new rail terminus in the Lime Street area to accommodate HS2 trains.

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

HS2: Phase 2

The second phase of High Speed Rail, which the Government wants to be fully operational by 2033, will cover an area from the West Midlands to Leeds and Manchester. It is expected that a further Bill detailing the plans for this part of the wider-scale project will be deposited into parliament in 2017. Further to the announcement of the preferred route for phase 2 on the 15th November 2016, which will see HS2 trains serve Liverpool Lime Street, the government has now opened a consultation period asking for responses to questions about route refinement and property compensation and assistance schemes.

The consultation period for both areas will close 9th March 2017. More information can be accessed [here](#)

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

The National Infrastructure Commission – A Call for Evidence

The National Infrastructure Commission has launched a 'call for evidence' to provide input in to the development of the National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) which will run for 15 weeks.

The call for evidence poses a range of questions divided into; cross-cutting themes, transport, digital communications, energy, water and wastewater, (drainage and sewerage), flood risk management, and solid waste.

Respondents are asked to email submissions to NIAEvidence@nic.gsi.gov.uk no later than Friday 10th February 2017. More Information can be found [here](#).

ASSETS AND BUILDINGS ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE FOR WIRRAL'S BUSINESSES

Wirral businesses are looking for new and refurbished commercial space to grow and expand into. We must ensure the best use of our real estate assets by linking them to business and community aspirations

Our Pledge Ambition:

We need to make Wirral a business-friendly borough and one way to achieve that is to make our planning processes simpler to encourage growth over the next five years.

Outcome Strategy – Asset Strategy:

Asset's Strategy- Priorities: 1. Delivering more integrated and customer focused services 2. Creating economic growth 3. Generating capital receipts and revenue streams 4. Reducing running costs



Associated Legislation:

Assets of Community Value Bill

The Bill had its first reading on 29 June 2016 through the Ballot procedure. The second reading was expected on 25 November 2016 but was withdrawn.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

Bill to make provision about the disposal of land included in a local authority's list of community value; and for connected purposes.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Councils urged to back community asset transfers

Public Finance, 03/11/2016

Summary- Research undertaken by the New Local Government Network on behalf of the independent trust Power to Change found understanding and acknowledgement of the benefits of asset transfer among council officers.

Community asset transfers are when councils transfer assets to community organisations in exchange for demonstrable community benefit, with services such as libraries, parks and community centres are among those most frequently transferred.

Brief Analysis- The review found several benefits of the switch including lower costs of service provision; protecting services that would otherwise be lost; and involving communities in the design and delivery of services. The research found that assets are more likely to be taken into community ownership were community centres, public green spaces, sports facilities and libraries.

Despite this found only 60% of councils had a policy for community transfer, and just half actively pursue this.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Report calls for £1bn fund to transfer public assets to communities

Local Gov, 08/11/2016

Summary- The Government should invest £1bn to help transfer public buildings and lands into the hands of community groups. The report, published by Locality, warns that unless urgent action is taken to protect England's assets, they could be lost for good. Calls for a new community asset investment programme to help community groups and organisations take over the management and ownership of public buildings and land.

Brief Analysis- The report found that the most deprived areas are particularly at risk of losing their community spaces, making inequalities more entrenched. It also provides recommendations for local government to abide by. For example, local government should ensure that councils have a consistent, transparent and flexible community ownership policy which is well communicated internally and externally and is supported by council leadership. It also recommends local government co-invest in assets in conjunction with communities through providing low-cost or zero interest loan finance for assets projects, including community-led housing.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Assets of Community Value Bill

The Bill has been withdrawn and won't progress any further, and therefore poses no potential implications for the Wirral Plan.

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BUSINESS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY 24th JANUARY 2017

REPORT TITLE:	BUSINESS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME REPORT
REPORT OF:	THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in cooperation with the other two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual work programme. This report provides an update regarding progress made since the last Committee meeting held on 29th November 2016.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. Members are requested to approve the proposed Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2016/17, making any required amendments, including suggestions for additional items.
2. Members are requested to approve the proposal to convene a dedicated session in February to review the service development proposals for Access Wirral. Also to give delegated authority to the Chair and Party Spokespersons to approve and refer any report arising from this session directly to Cabinet.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

To ensure members of the Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual scrutiny work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not Applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND THE WIRRAL PLAN

3.1.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Wirral Plan pledges
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Cabinet / Council

3.2 PRINCIPLES FOR PRIORITISATION

3.2.1 Good practice suggests that, in order to maximise the impact of scrutiny, it is necessary to prioritise proposed topics within the work programme. Members may find the following criteria helpful in providing a guideline towards ensuring that the most significant topics are prioritised:

Principles for Prioritisation	
Wirral Plan	Does the topic have a direct link with one of the 2020 pledges?
	Will the review lead to improved outcomes for Wirral residents?
Public Interest	Does the topic have particular importance for Wirral Residents?
Transformation	Will the review support the transformation of the Council?
Financial Significance	Is the subject matter an area of significant spend or potential saving?
	Will the review support the Council in achieving its savings targets?
Timeliness / Effectiveness	Is this the most appropriate time for this topic to be scrutinised?
	Will the review be a good use of Council resources?

- 3.3.2 By assessing prospective topics using these criteria, the Committees can prioritise an effective work programme that ensures relevance and the highest potential to enhance outcomes for residents.

3.3 DELIVERING THE WORK PROGRAMME

- 3.3.1 The work programme consists of a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports. Regular work programme update reports will provide the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

The work programme will be delivered through a combination of:

- Scrutiny reviews undertaken by task & finish groups
- Evidence days and workshops
- Committee reports provided by officers
- Standing committee agenda items, for example, performance monitoring and financial monitoring

3.4 UPDATE ON CURRENT SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

3.4.1 Tourism Task & Finish Scrutiny Review

The scrutiny review has now been completed following a number of evidence sessions. The final report is included as a separate item on this agenda.

3.4.2 Resident Parking Task & Finish Scrutiny Review

The Task & Finish Scrutiny Review is progressing. The objective of the review is for the Review Panel to understand the issues around the current policy on new and existing resident parking schemes and to consider any options which could be taken forward as improvements to the policy. The Review Panel has now met for its first evidence session, speaking to key Council officers and a number of residents to further understand the issues with the existing resident parking scheme.

3.4.3 Supporting the Creative Sector Scrutiny Review

At the previous committee meeting held on 28th November, a Review Panel for the Task & Finish Scrutiny Review was agreed and this included Councillors, Christine Spriggs, Dave Mitchell, Warren Ward and Julie McManus. An initial scoping meeting for the scrutiny review has now been scheduled 30th January.

3.4.4 Budget Scrutiny

A Cabinet report of 8th December presented a proposed budget for 2017/18 as part of a four year Financial Strategy to set a balanced budget for the subsequent three years to 2020/21. A workshop has now been held with relevant officers being invited to provide an overview and to answer questions on these proposals. The final report which captured Member comments on each of the proposals is included on this agenda.

3.5 SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS – ACCESS WIRRAL

- 3.5.1 Following the Customer Contact update report to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th September 2016, the timescales for the Access Wirral project have been expedited to support the savings required by the Council. The service development proposals for Access Wirral will go to Cabinet for approval on the 27th March 2017.
- 3.5.2 An approach to pre-decision scrutiny of Transformation Programme projects was reported to this Committee on 12th July 2016. In line with this approach, it is proposed the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee convenes a bespoke session in early February to review proposals for the Access Wirral Project prior to Cabinet taking a decision on 27th March. The session would be open to all Members of the Committee.
- 3.5.3 The next regular Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting is scheduled for 29th March. Therefore, it is also proposed that Committee gives delegated authority for the Chair and Party Spokespersons to approve and refer any report arising from the session directly to Cabinet.

3.6 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS

The following items for the 2016/17 Committee work programme have been identified and will be scheduled for future Committee meetings:

Item	Format	Approximate timescale
Supporting the Creative Sector Scrutiny Review	Task & Finish	Commencing January 2017
Budget Scrutiny	Workshop	Reporting to Committee on 24 th January 2017
Disaster Recovery Scrutiny Review follow-up report	Officer Report	To be confirmed
Access Wirral – Service Development Proposal	Workshop	Early February
Transforming Wirral – Further business cases	Workshops	To be confirmed
Welfare Reform (including Local Welfare Assistance Scheme)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Other Pledge Strategies	Committee presentation	To be confirmed

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

The delivery of the scrutiny work programme will be met from within existing resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Not Applicable

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Not Applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

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APPENDICES: **None**

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

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