



Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Tuesday, 31 January 2017
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

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

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

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

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 12)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016.

3. MAGENTA HOUSING ASSOCIATION - IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM

To receive a presentation from Magenta Housing Association in relation to the impact of Welfare Reform.

4. WIRRAL HOUSING STRATEGY (Pages 13 - 38)

The Assistant Director – Environmental Services will provide a presentation updating Members on progress made against the action plans arising from the Housing Strategy.

5. **HOMELESSNESS IN WIRRAL AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION BILL (Pages 39 - 48)**
7. **POLICY INFORM (Pages 49 - 82)**
8. **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 83 - 88)**
9. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR (PART 1)**
10. **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION 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.

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

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30 November 2016

Present: Councillor P Brightmore (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes A Sykes
T Jones B Berry
J McManus T Pilgrim
C Muspratt L Rowlands
T Usher C Carubia
J Walsh G Watt (In place of
I Williams T Anderson)

In attendance: Councillor B Mooney

Apologies Councillors L Reecejones and T Anderson

26 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.

The following interests were declared:

Councillor S Foulkes declared a Personal Interest in Item 9 – Financial Monitoring Quarter 2 2016/17 by virtue of his appointment of Board Director of Magenta Living (took part in discussions, remained in the meeting).

Councillor C Muspratt declared a Personal Interest in Item 4 – Notice of Motion: Recognising the Contribution of Friends Groups by virtue of her membership of a 'Friends Group' (took part in discussions, remained in the meeting).

27 **MINUTES**

Subject to amendment of the attendance list to reflect the presence of Councillor Geoffrey Watt (deputising for Councillor Tom Anderson) at the committee meeting held on 9 November 2016.

Resolved - That the minutes of the following meetings of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- **Special meeting 26 July 2016 – Call-In Domestic Refuse Collection Outline Business Case;**
- **Ordinary meeting 21 September 2016; and**
- **Special meeting 9 November 2016 – Community Patrol Services**

be confirmed as a true record.

28 **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair indicated that it was his intention to vary the order of business and consider item 8 (2016/17 Quarter 2 Wirral Plan Performance – Environment Theme) after item 3 (notice of Motion: Performance Management Reporting Arrangements).

29 **NOTICE OF MOTION: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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 ARRANGMENTS

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."

As neither Proposer nor Secunder of the motion was in attendance, the Chair informed that, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedures Rule 16(e), the matter would be considered 'in absentia'.

A Member commented that it was his belief that the majority of the requirements as embedded in the Notice of Motion were being achieved. Another Member stated that there had been good reports regarding the initial

meeting of the OSC Chairs, Vice Chairs and Spokespersons and that further meetings should be organised.

Similar comment was made regarding the Performance Management Member training session held in September 2016, although concern was expressed in so far as time delays in reporting could mean that information may be quickly dated.

A Member expressed a view that the referral of this particular Notice of Motion to all Overview and Scrutiny Committees had resulted in a lot of Member time having been spent on the matter, compared to it having been debated at Council as originally hoped. Another Member countered this argument stating that as a result of its referral the matter had probably received more detailed consideration than may have occurred in the course of a busy Council meeting.

On a motion by the Chair, duly seconded it was –

Resolved - That

- 1) the Notice of Motion be supported; and**
- 2) 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.**

30 **2016/17 QUARTER 2 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE - ENVIRONMENT THEME**

The Strategic Commissioner for Environment introduced his report that provided the 2016/17 Quarter 2 (July – September) performance report for Wirral Plan pledges under the Environment theme. The report, which was included as Appendix 1, provided a description of the progress in Quarter 2 as well as providing available data in relation to a range of outcome indicators and supporting measures.

The report informed that 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 piloted an approach agreed at that session to provide more detail in terms of performance against each of the pledges that fell under the remit of the Environment Committee.

The Strategic Commissioner for Environment informed that reporting had now been re-aligned to the Wirral Plan and pledges therein and that, as data for the identified indicators was released at different times throughout the year,

not all Pledges would have results each quarterly reporting period i.e. some indicators will be reported quarterly and some only on an annual basis with annual figures reported in the quarter they became available.

A discussion followed regarding the relevance of Plan Indicators, supporting measures, and targets. Members commented on a number of specific indicators that included statistics on the increase of numbers of people who are cycling and the number of fixed penalty notices issued for littering and dog fouling. Members questioned the Officer on key points relating to fixed penalty notices and how conflicting messages could be gleaned from the certain statistics i.e. more fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling and littering is better in terms of enforcement action, but could also be indicative of more litter being dropped, and therefore was not a good indicator in terms of compliance or behavioural change.

Members were apprised that, in general, there appeared to be positive behavioural change with more instances of waste 'pick up' having been witnessed by council staff and contractors.

Cabinet Member Bernie Mooney, who had attended the meeting to observe the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the new reporting format, provided additional information on the subject of littering, namely:

- Under 18 year olds cannot be fined.
- The Council was working with Eco-Schools to educate children on the issues arising from littering.
- Litter picks involving children were taking place in the borough and near schools.
- 80-85% of fines were to do with cigarette litter.
- There had been a 75% success rate in fine collection.
- 30% of the cases had ended up in Court.
- Wirral Council was nominated and a contender for a National Award.
- If any Councillors were aware of problem areas – report it.

The Strategic Commissioner for Environment informed that information regarding areas targeted for special clean-up and / or enforcement came from the use of information gained from complaints from Members and the public, general enquiries, and observations by council contractors and staff.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

31 **NOTICE OF MOTION: RECOGNISING THE CONTRIBUTION OF OUR FRIENDS GROUPS**

The Chair of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 17 October 2016 (minute 67 (6) refers),

the attached Notice of Motion, 'Recognising the contribution of our Friends Groups' proposed by Councillor Lesley Rennie and seconded by Councillor Paul Hayes was referred by the Mayor to this Committee for consideration –

“Council recognises the value and importance of Wirral’s parks and open spaces and welcomes the valuable contribution made by Council staff and volunteers and Friends Groups.

Council celebrates the recent achievement of 'Green Flag Awards' for parks and open spaces in Wallasey, including:

- Harrison Park
- North Wirral Coastal Park
- Wallasey Cemetery

Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to all successful Friends Groups in Wirral to reaffirm our commitment and support for the valuable work they undertake.”

As neither Proposer nor Secunder of the motion was in attendance, the Chair informed that, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedures Rule 16(e), the matter would be considered 'in absentia'.

The Chair led a short debate, and expressed his view that the Council was grateful for the work undertaken by all Friends Groups across the borough and felt that it would be appropriate, with Committee’s agreement, to recommend that the Motion be amended slightly to cover encompass all Wirral Friends Groups.

Resolved -

Subject to the substitution of the word 'Wirral' in place of 'Wallasey' after the words 'parks and open spaces'.

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

32 **NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS - REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL**

The Chair introduced the report of the Scrutiny Review Panel that set out the findings and recommendations arising from a Scrutiny Review – 'Number of Councillors' completed in November 2016. The Review initially arose from a Notice of Motion to Council on 20 October 2014 (minute no 57 refers) and was subsequently commissioned by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee as part of its work programme.

The aim of the review was for Members to gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding this subject that included the role of the local councillor in Wirral, the role of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, and a review of data comparing Wirral with other local authorities in England.

The Chair informed that it had been Panel Members aim to reach an informed view on whether the Council should actively progress a referral to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to conduct an Electoral Review that would as part of such a review consider amongst other things, the number of Councillors.

The Chair further informed the Environment Overview and Scrutiny that the findings of the investigation were self-evident. He stated that the Panel had been careful to maintain an analytical, data-led approach to the review.

Members noted the content of the report that summarised that the electoral arrangements employed by Wirral Borough Council compared favourably to its statistical neighbours; that those arrangements did not fall foul of any indicators prescribed by Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission), and therefore did not trigger a Further Electoral Review; and that only the Commission may direct Local Authorities to alter those arrangements. (Local Authorities may not alter electoral arrangements themselves).

The Chair informed that the Panel had developed the following recommendation as detailed in the report at Section 3.0 (Executive Summary & Recommendations) as follows, that:

“Having regard to the evidence presented, the Panel notes that the number of Councillors in Wirral is consistent with comparable local authorities. Consequently the Panel recommends that the Council does not request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England conduct a review of its electoral arrangements at this time.”

The Chair thanked Patrick Torpey, Scrutiny Officer for his support during the review, and his excellent work in the preparation of the report.

Resolved - That

- (1) the Number of Councillors – Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel be noted, and that the findings and recommendations of the review be endorsed; and**
- (2) the Review Panel report and recommendations be REFERRED TO CABINET for its endorsement.**

33 **WIRRAL LEISURE STRATEGY**

With the consent of the Chair and agreement of Committee Members, this item was considered in conjunction with the item 'Wirral Culture Strategy'. See Minute 34 (post).

34 **WIRRAL CULTURE STRATEGY**

The Strategic Commissioner for Environment introduced a presentation entitled 'Wirral Plan Pledge Update – Leisure and Cultural Opportunities for All'. The presentation provided the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the priorities, delivery and action plans for the Wirral Leisure and Culture Strategies.

The Strategic Commissioner for Environment also provided a summary of work underway in respect of the following:

- The move to the New Operating Model.
- Progress in delivering the Pledge - Quarter 2.
- Revised governance arrangements and the annual 'refresh'.
- New work i.e. Council's service transformation project.
- Conclusions and future scrutiny.

The Strategic Commissioner for Environment re-iterated the Council's commitment to those Wirral Plan Pledge(s) within the Leisure and Culture Strategies that fell under the remit of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee i.e.

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

"We will review the borough's leisure and cultural offer to make it fit for the future and optimise the use of public spaces, parks and gardens across Wirral as community assets."

The presentation informed that:

- Overall there had been good progress towards Pledge delivery at Quarter 2;
- Opportunities were being taken to re-invigorate governance arrangements, and to update / sharpen performance measures and action plans as part of move to the Council's New Operating Model; and that

- A key transformation project to aid and influence delivery of Pledge had recently commenced – this would include key project milestones during next 12 months.

Members expressed their views and ideas for principles of future scrutiny and the challenges faced. Amongst the topics discussed, Committee Members commented on the review of the Council's Library Service; the number, cost and reasons for employment of consultants; Birkenhead First project; the importance of volunteers; and the Council's role in, and co-operation with Liverpool City Region on leisure and culture matters – particularly given the scope to develop these areas to help combat social isolation.

Members also commented on the subject of sustainable transport – access for those with disabilities – and the inconsistent approach to access for the disabled to certain leisure facilities.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Commissioner for Environment for his presentation and updates on the topics raised by Members of the Committee.

Resolved – That the Wirral Plan Pledge Update in respect of the Wirral Leisure Strategy and the Wirral Culture Strategy be noted.

35 **2016/17 QUARTER 2 - FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director: Finance (Section 151 Officer) that provided the projected revenue and capital position for 2016/17 as at the close of Quarter 2 (30 September 2016) and due for consideration by Cabinet on 8 December 2016.

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

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

Resolved - That the report and appendices be noted.

36 **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report of the Chair that updated Members on the current position regarding the Committee's work programme as agreed for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The report informed on the process of developing and managing the scrutiny work programme for the municipal year. Members noted that the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in cooperation with the other two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual work programme and that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which fell within the remit of the Committee.

Members noted that the report provided an update regarding progress made since the last Committee meeting held on 21 September 2016 and that the current work programme was made up of a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports, providing the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

The Chair informed that a task and finish review of the Modern Slavery Act will commence in January 2017 and requested nominations for Members who wished to participate in the review. The following Councillors expressed their interest in taking part as Members of the Task and Finish Panel:

Chris Carubia (LD)
Moira McLaughlin (L)
Julie McManus (L)
Chris Meaden (L)
Tracey Pilgrim (C)

Resolved - That

- 1) **the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and direction of travel for 2016/17 be approved; and**
- 2) **a Task and Finish Panel be established to undertake a review into the topic of the Modern Slavery Act, comprising of the following Members:**

**Chris Carubia (LD)
Moira McLaughlin (L)
Julie McManus (L)
Chris Meaden (L)
Tracey Pilgrim (C)**

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THE WIRRAL PLAN: A 2020 VISION

WIRRAL'S HOUSING STRATEGY

Wirral Council
July 2016

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1.0 FOREWORD

Councillor George Davies - Cabinet Member – Housing and Community Safety

We are committed to driving growth in our economy: creating jobs, attracting new businesses and making sure that existing employers within the borough have every opportunity to expand and succeed.

Ensuring Wirral has a fantastic range of housing, at the right quality, is a fundamental factor in ensuring our plans for growth are successful. We must and will be ambitious, for our residents now and the Wirral of the future.

Through the work described in this Strategy I am confident and proud to announce we will build at least 3,500 new homes by 2020.

The importance of high quality, affordable homes cannot be underestimated. Our homes provide us with a safe and secure environment from which our communities grow and people build their confidence. It is clear that the impact a good home has on a family is almost immeasurable; in terms of health, wellbeing, social mobility and general quality of life.

Making sure living in Wirral means living in a good home is one of our most important pledges but more than that, it is a vital legacy this generation must pass on to the next. Building thousands of new homes is a key challenge for us: reversing a trend of under-building can help kick start our economy, encourage more people to live and work in our borough and transform the lives of our residents.

We have made commitments about how many houses we will build and how many houses we will improve. We will keep those promises, and we will go further; focussing on homebuilding as a key aspect of our strategy to grow our local economy and create jobs.

This Housing Strategy provides the blueprint for how we will succeed, alongside ensuring existing stock is improved where conditions fall below the required minimum standard and the most vulnerable people are protected.

We know our financial situation is challenging, and in times of continued austerity we must focus our attention and resources on those issues that bring the biggest impact on residents' lives. We must focus on what matters most to local people, on what brings the biggest improvements to their health, to their wellbeing and to their quality of life.

Housing is too complex an issue to be addressed by a single organisation. I thank all of our partners who have played such a key role in developing this innovative Strategy to transform our housing landscape. If we work together to deliver the ambitions of this strategy then we will also achieve many other Wirral Plan pledges: more people will live in Wirral, more businesses will move and thrive here, homes will be safer, people will be healthier and our borough will be more attractive.

It is clear to me that we have no bigger priority for the next five years: we must achieve substantive, transformational improvement in the level and quality of housing in Wirral.

The scale of the positive impact, on this generation and the next, means nothing else is acceptable.



A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "George Davies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor George Davies

The importance of high quality, affordable homes cannot be underestimated. Our homes provide us with a safe and secure environment from which our communities grow and people build their confidence.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Wirral Plan 2020 sets out a commitment to work together over the next five years and beyond to achieve the 20 Pledges. Our Wirral Plan pledge states:

Good quality housing which meets the needs of residents:

A safe and secure home is vital to all Wirral residents. We are working to 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.

Access to good quality housing is a foundation upon which people can build happy and successful lives, and a crucial component of strong and sustainable communities. It is important that our residents are able to find the right home in the right place so they and their families are able to live their lives to the full and achieve their potential.

More than 320,000 people live in Wirral, in more than 140,000 households. Ours is a borough of sharp contrasts; with many affluent and attractive residential areas alongside areas of high deprivation, particularly in specific areas of the borough.

It is our job to close this gap and work towards making sure residents in every one of Wirral's communities are able to live in a good, safe and attractive home.

This Housing Strategy sets out our long term strategic housing direction for Wirral. It sets out how we will work in partnership to deliver the ambitions of the Wirral Plan and our housing priorities.

We will work with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to improve the quality, quantity and access to housing, and deliver on what matters to local people, to ensure Wirral is a great place to live, work and invest.

Our housing priorities over the next five years:

This strategy has been developed based on ongoing consultation and discussion with key partners and stakeholders; helping us to identify key areas of focus which will deliver major housing improvements in Wirral.

We have carried out detailed research and analysed key statistics and data from a range of sources to identify new and emerging issues, and ensure our priorities for housing in Wirral are supported by a strong evidence base. Consultation has also taken place with registered housing providers, the Homes and Communities Agency and private developers to inform the priorities within this strategy.

The priorities to be achieved through this strategy and associated plans are:

- **Building more homes to meet our economic growth ambitions.**
- **Improving the quality of housing available to our residents.**
- **Meeting the housing and support needs of our most vulnerable people to enable them to live independently.**

Key to delivering our housing strategy will be its alignment with both the borough's planning framework, which will set out an overall housing requirement for Wirral; and Wirral's Growth Plan which recognises the borough has a significant number of opportunities for growth which we need to build and capitalise on to transform Wirral's economy in the future.

To deliver the priorities outlined above we are committed to working in partnership to achieve our ambitions and ensure Wirral's housing offer provides good quality housing that meets the needs of our residents.

Snap shot of housing in Wirral

Building more houses to meet our economic growth ambitions.

- Wirral's population is expected to increase by 2.6 % by 2037.
- Wirral has seen the second largest (7%) increase in GVA nationally.
- Housing sales have increased by 40% in Wirral since 2013/14.
- Almost 2,000 homes have been built in Wirral since 2010, of which more than 1,100 were affordable.

Improving the quality of housing available to our residents

- 1 in 3 homes fail to meet decent homes standard.
- 16% of households in Wirral experience difficulty in heating their homes.
- Almost 1,200 empty properties were brought back into use since 2010.
- Since 2015, 1,100 private sector homes have been licensed through our selective licensing scheme.

Meeting the housing and support needs of our most vulnerable people to enable them to live independently

- We have helped over 3,500 people access a home with 70% of those applicants assessed as having a priority housing need.
- Since 2010, we have worked in partnership to prevent over 2,800 families and individuals from becoming homeless.
- 200 extra care units currently in Wirral with demand for more.

A photograph of a construction site with workers in safety gear. The image is overlaid with a blue tint. In the foreground, a woman in a red hard hat and a man in a white hard hat are looking at blueprints. In the background, another worker in a blue hard hat is working on a wall made of grey concrete blocks. The scene is set on a wooden platform or scaffolding.

3.0 BUILDING MORE HOMES TO MEET OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH AMBITIONS

To meet our ambitions to grow the local economy and create more businesses and jobs in Wirral, we know we will need to build significantly more homes over the next five years than have been built over the last decade.

We are ambitious about growing our local economy, and have plans in place to make those ambitions a reality. Our vision over the next five years is for sustainable, accelerated growth based on a more connected Wirral; creating a place where all residents are able to enjoy a good quality of life in a high-quality borough.

Wirral is a location that is made for business. It is at the heart of the UK, close to Liverpool, Cheshire, North Wales and Greater Manchester and is an international gateway that's full of opportunity. It is clear that few places can match Wirral's connectivity for businesses.

We are perfectly positioned to become the most desirable postcode in the developing Northern Powerhouse. To meet our ambitions, we need to ensure investors and developers are aware of what Wirral has to offer, and we need to regularly work with them to help attract new residents and businesses to Wirral.

There is an intrinsic link between better housing and economic growth, and we know for every home we build, more jobs will be generated. The quality of the borough's housing offer is therefore critical to realising our growth ambition and delivering our investment priorities.

Housing also plays an essential role in the physical regeneration of an area, defining local places and helping us to make the most of Wirral's offer as a place to work, live and enjoy.

We have submitted a Housing Zone application and if we are successful we will be able to access government investment and support to accelerate house building. A strategic housing market assessment has been finalised which sets out the number of homes that will be needed over the next 15 years and beyond, and a review has been completed to identify available land and sites for new housing development in order to meet the borough's future housing needs.

We now need to actively market Wirral for housing development, and where appropriate, review and strengthen both our policies and delivery arrangements to encourage and enable housing growth in the borough. We will work with housing developers and investors to realise our ambitions, and where the housing market needs additional support to build new homes, then we will take action to proactively intervene and put in place measures to accelerate growth in the market. We will create a dedicated team to make this happen and provide the necessary leadership, expertise and investment to deliver the thousands of homes that we want to see built in the borough over the next five years and beyond.

We have already established the One Public Sector Estate Board through the Wirral Partnership to effectively manage public sector assets across the borough. This will also provide significant opportunities to ensure these assets are aligned to our economic and housing growth plans.

We want to ensure housing in Wirral is affordable for households in the owner-occupied, social and private rented sectors and will therefore explore housing development opportunities for a range of different housing tenures and requirements, including affordable and starter homes.

Wirral plays an important role in the Liverpool City Region, which is fundamental to the borough's economic growth and housing plans. As many as four in ten of our residents work in the Liverpool City Region or Chester, so ensuring our approach to housing and development is appropriate for both the borough and the wider region is vital.

As part of the recent Devolution Agreement, the Liverpool City Region will have greater flexibilities, allowing strategic planning powers to be used to help speed up economic growth, housing development and deliver the ambitions set out within this strategy.

The delivery of this Housing Strategy will therefore need to be flexible enough to respond to the opportunities and challenges which are likely to arise from the Growth Plan, the outcome of the Wirral and Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing Market Assessments and the future development of Wirral's planning framework.

What do we already know?

- By 2037, Wirral's population is estimated to increase by 2.6% with the number of households forecast to increase by 9.34%.ⁱ
- There is a shortage of identified housing sites in Wirral which will need to be addressed to meet our housing growth requirements.ⁱⁱ
- In 2014/15, 322 affordable homes were delivered in Wirral, 7.3% above our target.ⁱⁱⁱ

How are we going to get there?

- We will deliver at least 3,500 new homes, including 1,000 new homes at Wirral Waters by 2020.
- We will actively review the availability of land for housing development, and work collectively to unlock potential sites to build new homes.
- We will establish a dedicated housing growth team including housing, planning, economic development and asset management expertise to deliver our housing growth plans. This will provide the opportunity to set up a separate Housing Company in the future to proactively market and manage housing development opportunities in Wirral.
- We will establish a Housing Growth Board to oversee and govern the delivery of our housing growth ambitions and will work to ensure these are fully aligned to our broader economic growth plans.

- We will actively market Wirral for housing growth, and engage with housing developers, investors and other key stakeholders to develop packages of support to assist in the delivery of new homes.
- We will work as part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Devolution Agreement to commission a joint housing and employment land study, and develop a Single Statutory City Region Framework supporting the delivery of strategic housing and employment sites.
- We will establish a single approach to strategically manage our public sector assets across Wirral through our One Public Sector Estate Board.

How will we measure if we're getting this right?

- 3,500 new homes will be built by 2020.
- 300 new extra care units will be developed by 2020.

There is an intrinsic link between better housing and economic growth, and we know for every home we build, more jobs will be generated. The quality of the borough's housing offer is therefore critical to realising our growth ambition and delivering our investment priorities

A woman with curly hair, wearing safety glasses and a high-visibility yellow vest over a grey t-shirt, is kneeling on a wooden floor. She is focused on working on a white radiator, using a pair of pliers. A blue heat gun is placed on the floor next to her. The background shows a room under renovation with wooden framing and various tools.

4.0 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WIRRAL'S HOUSING OFFER FOR OUR RESIDENTS

A good quality home provides comfort and security for people regardless of their health, disability or age. It provides a solid foundation for residents to lead fulfilling and independent lives to earn a good living, raise a family and be an active participant in their local community.

Well maintained homes are an essential part of creating attractive and desirable neighbourhoods where people choose to live. Our ambition is to improve housing standards across Wirral, focussing on those areas most in need.

There is a clear link between the quality of a person's living conditions and their social, emotional and economic wellbeing. A key priority for this strategy will be to support residents who experience unacceptable living conditions, such as substandard housing and fuel poverty meaning they cannot afford to heat their homes. We will work to reduce the number of serious health conditions which are linked to living in cold homes across the borough.

Significant improvements have been made to the borough's social housing, however there is still further work to be done and we will ensure improvements continue, particularly for those homes which are hard to let or where there is no longer a demand from particular groups.

We are clear the responsibility for maintaining private housing standards rests first and foremost with the homeowner; however the Council and its partners have a key role to support our most vulnerable residents where serious hazards have been identified in the home that affect an individual's health and wellbeing. We have seen a positive impact following the introduction of our selective licensing scheme to improve housing standards in private rented accommodation, and we will continue to support all residents particularly those who are vulnerable, to ensure they are not living in an unsafe, cold or damp home.

What do we already know?

- Almost 1 in 4 private properties (23%) fails the decent homes standard with this figure significantly worse (32%) in the private rented sector.^{iv}


- Wirral has over 4,400 private empty homes (short and long term).^v
- 16% of households in Wirral experience difficulty in heating their home, with 7.1% of households only able to heat some or one room in winter.^{vi}
- It is estimated that 22 excess winter deaths in Wirral each year could be attributed to fuel poverty.^{vii}

How are we going to get there?

- We will work with landlords, residents and tenants to improve housing conditions, and where this fails we will take enforcement action or target financial assistance to the most vulnerable households to enable residents to remain in their homes.
- We will work to promote energy efficiency improvements in the poorest housing stock and facilitate initiatives which enable people to stay safe and warm in their homes and reduce fuel poverty.
- We will work with social housing providers to make the best use of stock, meet local housing need and attract people in employment, from within and outside the Borough, who need accommodation.
- We will work with our partners to target empty property interventions and bring long term empty properties back into use, improve neighbourhoods and the housing offer in Wirral.
- We will continue to implement our selective licensing scheme to improve housing standards in private rented accommodation.

How will we measure if we're getting this right?

- 2,250 private sector homes are improved by 2020.
- 1,250 empty homes are brought back into use by 2020.
- 1,200 homes requiring mandatory or additional licenses will be inspected by 2020.



5.0 MEETING THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE TO ENABLE THEM TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

We are determined to build strong and sustainable communities for all residents, ensuring we meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable people. We will ensure vulnerable people are able to live independently, and are provided with specialist support as and when they need it.

We want every resident to be able to make a valuable contribution to their communities. It is therefore vital vulnerable people are supported to live independently and empowered to play an active part in society through having the right choice and availability of housing.

We know the number of older people living in Wirral is increasing and we need to explore specialist housing provision to meet their expectations and extra demand. We know some residents in the borough want and would benefit from extra care housing, and will meet this need through developing new schemes across Wirral.

Early intervention and support for vulnerable people (e.g. older people, people who are homeless, those who have physical and learning difficulties, families who are in crisis and children who are looked after by the local authority), to improve their housing, can have a positive impact on a person's life and independence, helping them to succeed. This consequently can reduce the requirement for more substantial, specialist services such as residential care or hospital treatment.

The needs of homeless people are becoming increasingly complex, with high incidences of unresolved mental health problems, alcohol and substance misuse, anti-social and offending behaviour. We will continue to support our homeless residents to address these challenges in order that they can access both temporary homeless services and future accommodation.

We know welfare reform changes are impacting on many groups including disabled people, lone parents, families and young people. We will continue to review the impact of welfare reform on our residents and consider packages of support required.

What do we already know?

- By 2037, residents aged over 65 years are projected to make up 42% of all households and there is likely to be an increase in the number of households containing a resident with a disability to 67% by 2037. ^{viii}
- Over 4,000 older people in Wirral receive sheltered housing services. ^{ix}
- In 2015/16, an average of 335 households were prevented from becoming homeless every three months, through either assisting residents to remain in their own homes, or assisting them to access alternative accommodation. ^x
- Between 2013 and 2015, over 6000 households sought housing advice and assistance. In 30% of these cases, the potential loss of accommodation was as a direct consequence of affordability issues linked to welfare reforms. ^{xi}
- Between 2013/14 and 2015/16, the adaptations service saw an increase of 56.1% in the number of applications for people requiring minor works, to enable them to leave hospital and other social care settings and to also avoid admission to hospital. ^{xii}
- Over 2,000 home adaptations are completed each year to enable disabled people to remain in their own homes. ^{xiii}

How are we going to get there?

- We will complete a review of housing support services for older people to develop new models of delivering accommodation and support, including new extra care housing schemes and sheltered accommodation.
- We will complete a strategic review of all supported accommodation services for people experiencing social exclusion, to identify whether the current supported housing services offer meets the diverse needs of the Borough.

- We will continue to monitor and respond to the impacts of welfare reforms on vulnerable households; in particular we will examine the consequences of welfare reforms on Wirral's younger population so we can work in partnership to mitigate the impact.
- We will work to meet the multiple and complex needs of vulnerable homeless people and commission new support services to engage those who use our services.
- We will work to ensure housing is accessible through adaptations and other mechanisms to support residents' needs and keep them in their homes where possible.

How will we measure if we're getting this right?

- An increase in the number of people over 50 living in appropriate housing, that meets their needs (2015 Wirral Residents Survey).
- 300 new extra care housing units to be completed by 2020.
- Deliver 2,000 disabled adaptations to people's homes each year.
- Each year, 5,500 vulnerable residents will be supported in their accommodation to maintain their independence.
- Reduce homelessness through prevention.

We will ensure vulnerable people are able to live independently, and are provided with specialist support as and when they need it.

6.0 ACTION PLAN

Action	By When	Organisation
6.1 Building more homes in Wirral to meet our economic growth ambitions		
Finalise Wirral's new Strategic Housing Market Assessment.	July 2016	Wirral Council
Approval of Core Strategy Local Plan including affordable housing policy approach.	March 2017	Wirral Council
Work with partners to facilitate solutions to ensure the delivery of new affordable homes in the Borough.	March 2020	Wirral Council, Strategic Housing Partnership
Identify opportunities to unlock sites and identify resources required to kick-start both stalled and new housing sites in the Borough.	March 2017	Wirral Council
Support stalled sites and marginal housing schemes through the Council's Phase 1 Affordable Housing Programme.	March 2018	Wirral Council
Identify pipe-line housing sites to support the delivery of new homes in the Borough including potential use of Public Sector owned assets.	March 2017	Wirral's One Public Sector Estate Board
Work with private sector partners to ensure our housing growth plan reflects market demand.	March 2020	Wirral Council
Identify wider strategic and financial support in the delivery of new homes.	March 2020	Homes and Communities Agency
Complete Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing & Employment Market Assessment.	December 2016	Liverpool City Region Authorities
Undertake a feasibility review of the opportunity to develop a local housing company at either a Liverpool City Region or local authority level.	March 2017	Liverpool City Region Authorities
Establish a City Region Land Commission to support the better co-ordination and release of public assets with the aim of increasing sites for economic growth, housing and improved communities.	March 2020	Liverpool City Region Authorities
Develop a housing marketing plan as part of wider Liverpool City Region housing offer and Economic Growth Strategy.	March 2017	Liverpool City Region Authorities

Action	By When	Organisation
Develop Wirral's Marketing and Communication strategy to promote the Borough housing offer alongside Wirral's Growth Plan.	August 2017	Wirral Council
Identify required resources to deliver housing growth in Wirral	October 2016	Wirral Council
Identify employment opportunities available through house building programmes	March 2020	Wirral Partnership

Action	By When	Organisation
6.2 Improving the quality of Wirral's housing offer for our residents		
Develop targeted campaigns to address poor quality housing and fuel poverty through advice and assistance.	March 2020	Wirral Partnership
Deliver solid wall insulation programme in Selective Licensing areas.	March 2017	Wessex EAC
Deliver awareness raising programme of fuel poverty alleviation assistance and energy efficiency in Wirral.	March 2018	Energy Projects Plus
Maximise funding opportunities to facilitate initiatives which enable people to stay safe and warm in their homes.	March 2020	Wirral Council
Inspect all homes requiring mandatory or additional licensing for compliance.	March 2020	Wirral Council
Reduce the number of homes with a Category 1 or Category 2 Hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.	March 2020	Wirral Council
Refresh Wirral's empty homes delivery plan.	March 2017	Wirral Council
Undertake a survey to identify barriers preventing long term empty properties being brought back into use and what incentives would encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.	September 2016	Wirral Council
Extend the Selective Licensing scheme currently in operation in four areas of Wirral to further areas within the Borough.	March 2020	Wirral Council

Action	By When	Organisation
6.3 Meeting the housing and support needs of our most vulnerable people to enable them to live independently		
Review the adaptations programme to focus on health and social care priorities, including preventing hospital admissions and supporting hospital discharge	October 2016	Wirral Council
Explore opportunities to introduce smart home technology to support independent living	March 2017	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services / Wirral Council
Complete a strategic review of supported Housing Services for homelessness and socially excluded groups	September 2016	Wirral Council
Develop and finalise a Housing Support Commissioning plan	October 2016	Wirral Council
Develop a Young Persons Housing Plan to address the housing requirements of this client profile	October 2016	Young Persons Strategic Housing Group
Deliver 2,000 disabled adaptations to people's homes each year	March 2020	Wirral Council
Review the process route for people with disabilities and mobility problems who require access to re-housing	March 2017	Wirral Council
Establish a Learning Disabilities Housing Steering Group to ensure the current and future housing needs of people with Learning Disabilities are addressed	September 2017	Wirral Council
Establish an Older Person Housing Steering Group to ensure the current and future housing needs of people with Older People are addressed	September 2017	Wirral Council
Develop Supported Housing Strategy for all vulnerable client groups	March 2018	Wirral Council
Work with Private Rented Sector to enable opportunities to access suitable tenancies to discharge homelessness statutory duty e.g. agree minimum twelve month tenancy	March 2017	Wirral Council

Action	By When	Organisation
Commence homelessness review to inform the development of the 2018-2023 Homelessness Strategy	August 2017	Wirral Council
Deliver the Liverpool City Region Asylum Seeker Dispersal programme	March 2017	SERCO
Co-ordinate Wirral contribution to the Liverpool City Region response to Syrian Person Resettlement Programme	January 2017	Liverpool City Region Asylum & Syrian Refugee Lead Officers Group
Work with all partners to monitor the range and cumulative impact of welfare reforms, co-ordinate an impact assessment and develop effective responses	Ongoing from June 2016	Wirral Strategic Welfare Reform Working Group
Work with Registered Providers and private companies to deliver 300 additional Extra care homes	March 2018	Wirral Council
Undertake procurement framework and appoint delivery partners for Extra Care provision in Wirral	October 2016	Wirral Council
Complete strategic review of sheltered housing services for older people and agree scheme proposals	March 2017	Wirral Council

7.0 CONCLUSION

The provision of good quality homes which meet the needs of Wirral's existing and future residents is vital in providing people with a safe and secure environment in which to thrive. Wirral Council will work with partners to continue to collectively identify how new and existing initiatives should be maximised, focussing resources and ensuring initiatives are targeted to achieve our outcomes.

To support this process, this strategy has been developed based on a robust evidence base which will be continually reviewed and updated and as a result will clearly focus our three overarching priorities throughout the life of the strategy, ensuring they remain responsive to the changing housing environment.

We have set out our approach to working with a range of partners to respond to these priorities and ultimately meet our Wirral Plan pledge of 'good quality housing that meets the needs of residents'.

8.0 REFERENCES

- ⁱOffice for National Statistics (2015): 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-2037;. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-household-projections>
- ⁱⁱWirral Annual Monitoring Report, 2015
- ⁱⁱⁱAffordable Housing Performance Indicator, final for 2015/16, April 2016
- ^{iv}Wirral Council and David Adamson & Partners, Wirral Private Sector House Condition Survey 2013
- ^vWirral Council, Council Tax Records, 1st April 2016
- ^{vi}Wirral Council and David Adamson & Partners, Wirral Private Sector House Condition Survey 2013
- ^{vii}Department of Energy & Climate Change (2012): Getting the Measure of Fuel Poverty; (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/excesswintermortalityinenglandandwalesreferencetables>).
- ^{viii}Office for National Statistics (2015): 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-2037;. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-household-projections>
- ^{ix}Wirral Council Supported Housing Services
- ^xDepartment of Communities & Local Government (2015): Homelessness Statistics; <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>
- ^{xi}Department of Communities & Local Government (2015): Homelessness Statistics; <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>
- ^{xii}Wirral Council Supported Housing Services
- ^{xiii}Wirral Council Supported Housing Services

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**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday, 31 January 2017**

REPORT TITLE:	Homelessness in Wirral and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Bill
REPORT OF:	Managing Director for Delivery

REPORT SUMMARY

This represents an update to the report issued to the Regeneration & Environment Policy and Performance Committee in March 2016, in which Members were advised of the extent of homelessness in Wirral, and the potential effects on levels of homelessness, arising from welfare reforms. This report is also intended to inform Members of the progress of the Homeless Reduction Bill and how this new legislation may change how Council’s respond to the issue of homelessness.

The issue of homelessness has the potential to affect all Wards within the Borough.

Tackling the challenges and causes of homeless in Wirral is a key outcome under the Environment theme in ‘Wirral Council Plan: A 2020 Vision’ of protecting the most vulnerable of Wirral’s residents. It also assists with the achievement of a number of the pledges set out in the Council’s vision, these being:

- *“Good quality housing that meets the needs of residents”*
- *“Children are ready for school”*
- *“Wirral residents live healthier lives”*
- *“Vulnerable children reach their full potential”*
- *“Reduce child and family poverty”*
- *“Zero tolerance to Domestic Violence”*
- *“Community Services are joined-up and accessible”*
- *“People with disabilities live independently”*
- *“Older People Live Well”*
- *“Wirral’s neighbourhoods are safe”*

This does **not** represent a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Members are requested to note the content of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 The content of this report is for noting.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 No other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 In March 2016, Members were informed that homelessness rarely has a single cause or explanation; it is often regarded as a symptom of wider underlying problems, for example those who suffer from health problems, substance misuse or have an offending background. It is generally agreed that homelessness usually occurs as a result of the combination of:

- Structural factors such as poverty, housing shortages; or
- Individual factors e.g. vulnerability through ill health, drug use, etc.

3.2 Compared to the general population, those who are homeless experience poorer health outcomes and the consequences of homelessness will often stretch beyond the immediate effect and go on to have a lasting impact on those individuals.

3.3 The previous report explained that there are different 'types' of homelessness and the Council's response will differ accordingly:

4.0 STATUTORY HOMELESSNESS

4.1 Local Authorities in England have a legal duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. This is commonly referred to as the 'main homeless duty'. In addition to the statutory responsibility of the provision of accommodation for eligible applicants, the Housing Act 1996 also places a duty on Councils to provide free advice and assistance to all people experiencing, or threatened with homelessness.

4.2 In 2015/16, the number of households that were determined as being owed the main homeless duty was 72. This represents a reduction of 28% against the previous year and a reduction of 47% against 2013/14 figures. As indicated to Committee in March 2016, this reduction in the number of statutory homeless acceptances is felt to be as a consequence of an increased focus on preventing homelessness from actually occurring, rather

than a decrease in the number of homeless, or potentially homeless households presenting to the Council.

- 4.3 The table below indicates the main reasons that led to homelessness for those households that were identified as being owed the main homeless duty. At Committee March 2016 the report advised that the numbers of people that were owed a main homeless duty by the Council as a consequence of a violent relationship breakdown with their partners had, doubled when compared with 2013/14 data. At the conclusion of the 2015/16 financial year, the total number of people accepted as statutory homeless as a result of a violent relationship breakdown with their partner was 14, representing a 27% increase against 2014/15 levels, and over 130% increase against 2013/14 statistics.

Main Reason for loss of last settled home – Households owed a full duty	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	26	13	7
Other friends/relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate	23	11	7
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	14	8	11
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	6	11	14
Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated person	2	4	3
Racially motivated violence	0	2	0
Other form of violence	8	6	3
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0
Other form of harassment	3	4	1
Mortgage arrears	12	5	3
Rent arrears – Social Landlord	1	0	0
Rent arrears- Private Sector Dwelling	2	3	2
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	14	17	9
Other reasons for loss of rented or tied accommodation	5	0	1
Required to leave National Asylum Support Service Accommodation	0	0	0
Left Prison/Remand	6	0	0
Left Hospital	2	4	1
Left other institution or local authority care	3	5	0
Left HM Forces	2	0	0
Other reason for loss of settled home	7	5	10

Table 1: Main reason for loss of settled home for households owed a full duty

5.0 SINGLE HOMELESSNESS

- 5.1 Single homeless people are those who are homeless, but who do not meet the priority need criteria to be housed by the local authority under homelessness legislation. They may live in supported accommodation, ‘sofa-surf’ or live in squats. They may also be referred to as non-statutory homeless. In terms of supported housing for homeless people in Wirral, there are 9 organisations, delivering 19 distinct services, which provide 391 bed-spaces for both young people and adults.

- 5.2 Access to these services is arranged through a web-based referral management system called ‘MainStay’ which is in operation across the Liverpool City Region. Mainstay acts as a “virtual” single point of access for

those needing floating or accommodation based support services. This means that those who require these services can present to an 'assessment point' at a range of services across the Borough and receive a common assessment and be referred to the most appropriate service(s) which meets their needs at that point. Whilst the system is operated on a Pan-Merseyside basis, it has been tailored to be reflective of the housing need, and service provision within each individual Authority.

- 5.3 For 2015/16, 'MainStay' reports that **786** homeless, unique, individuals were accommodated in Wirral's homeless accommodation services.

6.0 ROUGH SLEEPERS

- 6.1 Rough sleepers are defined for the purpose of statistics as "people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as shop loading areas, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats and stations) In Wirral, Service Users have reported sleeping in Birkenhead Park, coal-bunkers, sheds they have broken into and tents along the waterfront.
- 6.2 Each year, Central Government requires Council's to perform either a 'count' or 'estimate' of the number of rough sleepers in their respective boroughs. Whilst providing useful data, it is generally accepted that the methodology (set out by Central Government) used to conduct Rough Sleeper estimates/counts is not sufficiently robust enough to capture the true scale of the problem; a situation that the Government themselves recognises and which is in the process of being re-evaluated.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding this, the most recent Rough Sleeper estimate conducted in Wirral in November 2016 identified 11 Rough Sleepers, representing an increase of 37.5% against the previous year's data.
- 6.4 It is important to note that there may be multiple reasons why an individual may sleep rough in Wirral. For some, it represents a lifestyle choice, whereas for others it is borne out of the fact that some individuals will demonstrate with behaviours that are simply too challenging to be effectively and safely managed within a hostel setting and, consequently, experience a cycle of service exclusions. Even when excluded, these individuals are still able to access the YMCA Night Shelter unless they continue to demonstrate challenging behaviour, which may result in a time-limited exclusion period.

7.0 HOMELESS REDUCTION BILL

- 7.1 The Homelessness Reduction Bill (HRB), which draws heavily on Welsh homeless legislation and proposals put forward by an independent expert panel commissioned by the homeless charity 'Crisis', is a Private Member's Bill recently introduced by Bob Blackman MP.
- 7.2 The HRB, which has benefited from pre-legislative scrutiny by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, proposes significant change to the current homeless legislation. Focusing on advice, information and prevention, the HRB aims to set out more clearly the types of housing advice and information local authorities must provide to people before they become homeless or are threatened with homelessness. This new duty would apply to all eligible households irrespective of priority need and intentional homelessness. The onus would be on local authorities to demonstrate that they are taking reasonable steps to prevent homelessness.
- 7.3 Within current homeless legislation, a person is considered as being threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days. The HRB proposes to extend that period to 56 days to enable local authorities to respond to the threat of homelessness at a much earlier point, and providing help such as mediation with landlords, financial assistance by way of grant or loan, or debt management support. It will further provide that local authorities will have to accept a valid notice to quit or equivalent as evidence that the tenant is threatened with homelessness, overturning the rule laid down in *Sacupima v Newham LBC* [2001] that tenants do not become homeless until physically evicted from their properties.
- 7.4 A full summary of the principal changes that will be introduced once the bill has been passed can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 7.5 Although welcoming the broad principles behind the proposed changes, the initial impression of housing professionals is that the changes will result in increased demand on Housing Options Teams around the country. For example, at the current time, Councils are required to begin investigating homelessness, once the household has received formal notice that they will be made homeless within 28 days. The proposed increase to 56 days will result is likely to result in increased footfall experienced by the Housing Options Team.
- 7.6 In December 2016, The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced the availability of funding, for which Local Authorities could bid for; to reinforce homeless prevention activity; to prevent rough sleeping; and to prepare for the introduction of the HRB. A co-ordinated bid was submitted on behalf of the authorities that comprise the Liverpool City Region and, although DCLG initially advised that the LCR bid had been

unsuccessful, they have since made contact to discuss the potential of funding further homeless-related activity across the LCR, through the devolution agreement.

8.0 WELFARE REFORM – FUNDING FOR SUPPORTED HOUSING (*EXEMPT ACCOMMODATION*)

- 8.1 The previous report submitted in March 2016 to the Committee focused on the impacts of certain reforms; the Benefit Cap, the Spare Room Subsidy and the changes to the administration and eligibility of the Local Housing Allowance and Housing Benefit systems. Personnel from the Housing Options Team continue to work closely with colleagues from Finance regarding the imposition of these reforms and to ensure that those affected, or potentially affected by these Reforms are able to access appropriate advice and assistance. To facilitate this, the Housing Options Team has recently implemented a Service Level Agreement with Wirral Citizens Advice Bureau for the provision of a money/debt advice service, targeted at those households experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, located within the Housing Options Team.
- 8.2 For the purpose of this report however, the focus is on the proposed changes to the funding arrangements for supported housing services, which are a key resource in responding to homelessness.
- 8.3 Supported housing covers a range of different housing types, including group homes, hostels, refuges, supported living complexes and sheltered housing. Rent levels in supported housing are typically higher than for similar accommodation in the private sector.
- 8.4 For those residents eligible to receive Housing Benefit, it can assist with their rent payments. Supported housing that meets certain criteria is treated as '*exempt accommodation*' for Housing Benefit purposes. As such, the Housing Benefit regulations, which limit rents to defined local levels, do not apply to accommodation where the landlord (housing association or voluntary organisation) provides "*care, support or supervision*"
- 8.5 The Summer Budget 2015 announced the imposition of rent reductions for social housing landlords. Measures included in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 required these landlords to lower their rents by 1%, each year for four years from April 2016. This was followed by the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 in which the Chancellor announced his intention to cap the amount of rent that Housing Benefit payable in the social rented sector to the relevant Local Housing Allowance level, which is the rate paid to most private renters on Housing Benefit

- 8.6 Supported Housing Providers have argued that, given their higher rent levels and slim operating margins, the proposed measures would have a particularly negative impact on their revenue streams and could, potentially, threaten the viability of existing and future schemes. Nationally, Supported Housing Providers have called for an exemption for supported housing from both of these measures, arguing that supported housing delivers average net savings to the public purse and that demand for this type of accommodation is growing.
- 8.7 Consequently, Government announced a one-year exemption for the supported housing sector from the 1% rent reduction. A one-year delay in applying Local Housing Allowance caps to residents in supported housing was also announced. The DWP and DCLG jointly commissioned an evidence review to look at the size and scope of the supported housing sector.
- 8.8 In September 2016, Government announced a further delay in the application of LHA rates in the supported housing sector to 2019/20. At the point of implementation, the rates will apply to all supported housing residents in receipt of Housing Benefit. At the same time, a new funding model will be introduced under which local authorities in England will receive ring-fenced funding to meet the shortfall between the LHA rates and the cost of provision, and which will be administered to housing providers. The Government also announced that the Shared Accommodation Rate for claimants under 35 will not apply to residents in supported housing. A separate funding model may be developed specifically for short-term accommodation such as refuges and hostels.
- 8.9 The report arising from the evidence review was published on 21 November 2016 together with a consultation document. The consultation process, which is taking submissions up to 13 February 2017, is seeking views on how the new funding model should work in England.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The provision of a homeless service is a statutory requirement under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 10.2 Assuming its' enshrinement in law, the Council will be legally obliged to comply with the requirements of the HRB.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

11.1 There are no immediate resource implications arising from this report, however, the proposed requirements of the HRB represent a comparatively significant deviation from current practice. As such, it is recommended that a further report is brought to Members, once the bill has been passed, identifying the consequential resource implications.

12.0 RELEVANT RISKS

12.1 There is a continued risk that due to current economic climate and national agenda that incidence's of homelessness will increase significantly. There will need to be continued investment in related services and continued co-operation with relevant agencies to address this.

12.2 Failure to comply with the requirements of the HRB, once passed, will mean that the Council is in breach of its statutory obligations.

12.3 Supported Accommodation Services, funded by the Council and delivered by the community, voluntary and charitable sectors, are a key resource in combatting homelessness. Disinvestment in these services may compromise the Council's ability to deliver an effective response to the issue of homelessness in the Borough and may, potentially, result in increased incidences of visible homelessness. As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that the requirements of the HRB are drawn heavily from Welsh legislation, where funding for homeless accommodation services remains ring-fenced, in acknowledgment of the importance of the preventative housing-related support delivered by these services.

13.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

13.1 The Wirral Homeless Forum, which is facilitated and chaired by the Council, is intended to provide quarterly partnership focussed events that allow all homeless stakeholders from public, private and voluntary sectors to meet and discuss relevant issues in the borough. Members of the Forum work in partnership to respond to emerging policy, including consultation exercises, and funding opportunities; and, to work jointly to continually improve the homelessness response across all sectors in Wirral.

14.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: *Principal changes to LA response to homelessness*

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
<i>'Homelessness and the impact of welfare reform'</i> Regeneration & Environment Policy and Performance Committee	March 22nd 2016

Appendix 1: Principal changes to LA response to homelessness

Extending the period an applicant is “threatened with homelessness” from 28 to 56 days. Currently, Local Authorities can accept a homeless application from someone, if it is likely that they could lose their home within the next 28 days.

This applies to tenancies in the Private and Social Housing Sectors and homeowners.

This Bill extends that period from 28 days to 56 days

Amending the definition of homelessness. To apply to households served with a notice seeking possession where the landlord intends to apply for possession and the council does not ask the applicant to remain in the accommodation.

Strengthened advice and information duty: Strengthens and clarifies the duty on housing authorities to provide advisory services to help to prevent homelessness.

New duty to assess and agree a personalised plan Requires local authorities to carry out an assessment of an applicant’s case if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness and develop an individual action plan

New ‘prevention’ duty in cases of threatened homelessness Requires local authorities to help to ensure that suitable accommodation does not cease to be available for applicants who are threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.

New ‘relief’ duty to help to secure accommodation Requires local authorities to help to secure accommodation for all applicants who the authority is satisfied are homeless and eligible for assistance, regardless of whether they are in priority need or whether they might be intentionally homeless

The Bill allows councils to give notice to applicants whom they consider to have deliberately and unreasonably refused to cooperate with the above duties or to take any step set out in the personalised plan People in this position are not entitled to the full homelessness duty even if they are in priority need. However, the council is required to accommodate priority need applicants until they are made a final offer of accommodation (which must be at least a 6 month tenancy).

POLICY INFORM:

Environment



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.

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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 Environment Theme states:

“Wirral has an attractive and sustainable environment, where good health and an excellent quality of life is enjoyed by everyone who lives here.”

Environment Policy Briefing:

This policy briefing focuses specifically on policies and legislation relating to the Environment Theme and is intended to provide Members of the Environment 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 Environment 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 however 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 cards, 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

- 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.

Police & Justice

- 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.

Schools and Apprenticeships

- 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 the 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 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 ENVIRONMENT PLEDGES- POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

GOOD QUALITY HOUSING THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS

A safe and secure home is vital to all Wirral residents. We are working to 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

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will build and improve 7,000 houses over the lifetime of this five year plan. Our plans include building 3,500 new homes, improving 2,250 private sector properties and bringing 1,250 empty homes back into use by 2020. We will also continue to tackle the challenges and causes of homelessness in Wirral.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral Housing Strategy Priorities: 1 Building more homes in Wirral to meet our economic growth ambitions 2. Improving the quality of Wirral's housing offer for our residents 3. Meeting the housing and support needs of our most vulnerable people to enable them to live independently



Associated Legislation:

Neighbourhood Planning Bill

Reporting stage: The Bill was presented to Parliament on Wednesday 7th September 2016. The Bill's second reading debate took place on Friday 10 October 2016. The Bill was passed through third reading on Tuesday 13 December 2016. The Bill's first reading in the House of Lords took place on the 14 December 2016. The Bill's second reading is scheduled for 17 January 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Support the Government's ambition to deliver one million new homes, whilst protecting those areas that we value most including the Green Belt;
- Deliver the homes and infrastructure that this country needs; and
- Transform the way we plan for major infrastructure projects in this country.

Concerns and progress so far:

What was going to be the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill has now been published as the Neighbourhood Planning Bill and no longer contains reference to the National Infrastructure Commission. In response to the Bill, Wirral so far has four designated neighbourhood forums, working on their own local planning proposals, with one adopted neighbourhood plan, another plan past referendum and at least two other groups expected to apply.

Associated Legislation:

Renters' Rights Bill (HL)

Report Stage: Bill presented to the House of Lords on the 10th June 2016. The Bill's Committee Stage took place on the 18th November, with a date for its report stage yet to be scheduled.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Make the provision for tenants' access to database of rogue landlords and property agents;
- the end of certain letting fees for tenants;
- the implementation of mandatory electrical safety checks; and
- the prevention of rogue landlords from obtaining an HMO licence.

Concerns and progress so far:

The Bill's primary focus is to amend the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 in order to forbid lettings agents from charging tenants a multitude of fees. The Bill has received strong support in the House of Lords but as it is a Private Members' Bill, its future progression through parliament is questionable. Its progress has though been boosted by a petition named 'Making Renting Fair in England', which has now gained over 250,000 signatures. The Bill will undoubtedly receive additional momentum thanks to announcement in Chancellor Phillip Hammond's Autumn Statement, pledging to abolish upfront letting agents' fees in England 'as soon as possible'. There has, though, been some criticism of the Bill, which claims that it unfairly penalises small firms who charge 'fair' fees, as well as the possible resulting increase in rents as the cost implications of the Bill are passed from landlords to tenants.

Associated Legislation

Housing Standards (Preparation and Storage of Food by Tenants in Receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit) Bill

Second Reading Debate Stage: The Bill was presented to parliament on the 20th October 2016. Its second reading debate has been delayed twice, and is now expected to take place on the 20th January 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Require landlords of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit to ensure that their rented accommodation meets minimum standards for the hygienic storage and preparation of food;
- To ensure such rented accommodation contains adequate appliances, equipment and utensils for the cooking of food.

Concerns and progress so far:

This Private Members' Bill seeks to prevent vulnerable families being left hungry due to their property lacking basic cooking facilities, and has so far received cross-party support. Prior to the Bill's second reading, the Bill's sponsor, Frank Field Labour MP for Birkenhead, wrote to Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP, asking him to consider adopting it as a government Bill.

Associated Legislation:

Homelessness Reduction Bill

Committee Stage: The Bill was presented to parliament on the 29th June 2016. The Bill had its Second Reading debate on 28 October 2016. The Bill has now been committed to a Public Bill Committee. The Public Bill Committee will meet next on a date to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Make provision about measures for reducing homelessness, specially the reform of current homelessness legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 ;

Concerns and progress so far:

The Private Members' Bill has received government backing, with Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP, saying on the 24th October 2016: "No one should have to sleep rough on the streets. We want to build a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few..... This government is therefore, very pleased to support Bob Blackman MP's Private Members Bill, with its ambitious measures to help reduce homelessness." However, the Bill will place additional responsibilities on local councils if it becomes law, which the LGA has criticised. Lord Porter from the LGA has said 'Simply adding more duties to councils is not the answer to tackling homelessness.' The LGA has also stressed that any changes in the duties of councils brought about by the Bill must be fully funded by the government, alongside existing commitments. On the 14th November 2016, a money resolution was passed on the Bill. On the 7th December 2016, a briefing from the LGA stated that the Bill is 'far more workable than the original draft' following engagement of councils and the LGA, and the LGA 'supports the intent of many of the amendments proposed by MPs'. The LGA are not seeking to obstruct the passage of the Bill through Parliament.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Supported Housing Cap

LGC, 15/09/2016

Summary- Ministers have conceded a ring-fenced fund to take supported housing out of the local housing allowance cap system. In a parliamentary statement, work and pensions secretary Damian Green said he would defer application of the allowance cap to supported housing until 2019-20, when "we will bring in a new funding model which will ensure that the sector continues to be funded at current levels". For rents above the cap the government would devolve funding in England to councils to 'top up' funding to supported housing providers with higher costs. "In recognition of the need to manage the transition to a new funding regime carefully, we will ring-fence the top-up fund to ensure it continues to support vulnerable people," Mr Green said.

Brief Analysis- The supported housing cap has been controversial, as applying the cap would have hit some of our most vulnerable residents and jeopardized many of the supported housing schemes that were due to be developed. The LGA also argued that the proposed cap on benefit paid to support rents in each area would not have covered the extra costs to supported housing providers of specialist equipment and adaptations. It is therefore positive that the Government has listened to the concerns councils had over the risks of applying the Local Housing Allowance cap to supported accommodation.

Associated Emerging Policy

£40 million homelessness Prevention Programme

[Gov.uk, 17/10/2016](#)

Summary- The government announced on the 17th October 2016 their new homelessness prevention programme which will tackle the issue by focusing on the underlying issues which can lead to somebody losing their home.

Brief Analysis- The programme contains £20 million of funding for local authorities to pilot new initiatives to tackle homelessness in their area, responding to the specific needs in their communities and focusing on prevention at an earlier stage. It also provides for a £10 million investment in targeted support for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough or those new to the streets, and finally a £10 million investment in Social Impact Bonds to help long-term rough sleepers with the most complex needs stop returning to the streets, the underlying reasons for which could range from potential mental health illnesses or substance abuse problems.

Associated Emerging Policy

£18 million Capacity Fund

[Gov.uk, 11/11/16](#)

Summary- The Housing Minister, Gavin Barwell, announced on the 11th November 2016 a new fund to accelerate house building in the UK. Councils can now bid for a share of the 'capacity fund' to tackle planning issues that can cause delay and prevent builders from getting on site and starting work quickly.

Brief Analysis- A key measure in the scheme includes the creation of another six new housing zones across the UK, one of which being the Wirral Waters housing zone on the existing regeneration site. These housing zones will support development on brownfield land with huge housing potential through local councils working in partnership with private developers in order to provide a total of 10,000 homes. Councils within these housing zones can now apply for investment from the capacity fund with the aim of speeding up house building on the most challenging sites. Other new sites that have been granted 'housing zone' status include Sheffield Housing Zone and Sandwell Housing Zone in the West Midlands.

Associated Emerging Policy

Government Housing White Paper

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, is due to release his White Paper in January 2017, having been delayed from December 2016, as confirmed during Chancellor Phillip Hammond's autumn statement on the 23rd November. The White Paper will focus on housing supply and proposals designed to speed up house building, with measures set to include a £2 billion investment to encourage new developers to build at up to double the rate of traditional house builders.

Associated Emerging Policy

Autumn Statement 23/11/16

Regarding housing policy, Chancellor Phillip Hammond announced during his autumn statement that he will invest £1.4 billion to provide 40,000 affordable homes, as well as £2.3bn in housing infrastructure fund to help provide 100,000 new homes in high-demand areas. In line with a key focus of the Renters Rights Bill put forward in the House of Lords on the 10th June 2016, the Chancellor also pledged to abolish upfront letting agents' fees in England 'as soon as possible'. Such fees are currently unregulated and can often total over £1000 in some areas of the country, in particular London. Further development regarding housing can be expected in Mr Sajid Javid's housing White Paper due for publication in December.

Associated Emerging Policy

Possible Fines for Housing Developers

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, hinted on the 7th November 2016 during the Conservative Party Conference that he would consider fining developers who do not build on land quickly enough after having received planning permission. He accused large developers and house-builders of deliberately restricting housing supply, to keep prices high and so boost profits. In England alone, there is now planning permission available for 476,000 homes that remain unbuilt, which is a record high. Expect to see more on this matter in Mr Javid's housing White Paper due in December.

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

Housing Standards (Preparation and Storage of Food by Tenants in Receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit) Bill 2016-2017.

Frank Field MP presented the above Bill to Parliament on 20th October 2016 as one which would require 'all landlords in receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit (social or private) to provide basic facilities, which would include a fridge and a cooker as minimum standards for the hygienic storage and preparation of food, and contains adequate appliances, equipment and utensils for the cooking of food'. Inclusion of these items provide the ability for the tenant to be able to cook and store food, which would assist them to manage better on welfare benefits or with food received from food banks, which has proved to be an issue for some. This would assist some vulnerable people to be able to sustain a tenancy

Providing appliances and utensils would represent a shift in the responsibility of the landlord along with the repairing obligations of the appliances. Providing these items poses a potential issue for private rented deposits because if cooking appliances and utensils are included, and become broken or damaged (it could be the end of life for the item), it may be taken from any deposit paid, which could result in the tenant being unable to move on to other private rented accommodation as they may not have enough for a new deposit. This may free up Wirral's Local Welfare Assistance funding which is currently available to those eligible to purchase this equipment.

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

Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17

The Homeless Reduction Bill represents a key shift in homelessness legislation and local practice, particularly in widening advice and assistance to all households and indicating a move away from an assessment of 'priority need'. This is coupled with a proposed duty to assist households now threatened with homelessness within 56 days. If enacted, the Bill will require further investment in local homeless services in order to provide specific, high quality information tailored to meet individual needs. The Bill would significantly increase the volume of households with a legal right to high quality, personalised housing advice and support. In order, to meet the expectations within the Bill to prevent homelessness, wider specialist service areas are required such as money/ debt advice or legal advice/ representation. Wirral Council would have to seek to engage or commission such services to assist in supporting households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The Bill also seeks to assist Council's to discharge their homeless duties by amending the current 12 month tenancy condition to a 6 month tenancy. This area of the Bill would support further work to expand access to the private rented sector and assist the effective move-on of homeless households. In addition, the Bill includes a duty to provide grant or loan assistance, and will be required to address a higher number of households. This proposal may have implications for the future use of the homeless prevention fund which had expenditure of £10,800 in 2015/16. Furthermore services which administer key local resources such as Discretionary Housing Payments, and Local Welfare Allowance may be impacted by the proposed Bill.

Early intervention, as set out in the Bill, has positive social and economic benefits and reduces costs to services such as Public Health, Criminal Justice and other public bodies. The Government has indicated that additional funding for homelessness may be made available upon royal assent of the Bill. Wirral needs to ensure that local services are sufficiently resourced and a strong network of partnership services in place to meet any new statutory obligations that the Bill would enforce.

Extension of HMO Licensing Scheme

The government is currently consulting on the detail of provisions to extend the mandatory HMO licensing scheme from just 3 storey HMOs as it is at present, to all HMOs. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has released its latest consultation paper on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and residential property licensing reforms which includes proposals to extend mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation following the Government's technical discussion paper published in November 2015.

The Government proposes to extend the definition on mandatory licensing from 2017, subject to Parliamentary approval. At present, the requirements state that any property which:

- comprises of 3 or more storeys; and
- has 5 or more occupiers living in 2 or more single households; and
- contains shared facilities such as a kitchen, bathroom or toilet must be licenced.

The proposals seek to remove the "3 or more storeys" requirement so that any HMO with 5 or more occupiers, regardless of how many floors, will fall within the scope of mandatory licensing.

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

Extension of HMO Licensing Scheme (Cont.)

In addition, the Government intends to extend mandatory licensing to flats which are occupied by five or more persons living in 2 or more households if it is in a converted building where part of a building is used for commercial or other non-residential purposes. It is estimated that the current proposals will make an additional 174,000 HMOs subject to mandatory licensing nationally.

If the proposals are brought into force then there will be a six month grace period for landlords to comply with the new requirements. Failure to obtain the correct license after the end of the grace period would allow the local authority to initiate criminal proceedings with unlimited fines imposed on those found guilty of an offence and the possibility of rent repayment orders being made. Once the new Housing and Planning Act comes into full effect in early 2017 this would also allow for fixed penalty notices of up to £30,000 to be made as well.

Officers are currently looking at the impact of this legislation which is likely to double the number of HMOs in Wirral which will be included in the extended mandatory licensing scheme. This will have resource implications for the HMO Team which is currently being reviewed. Timescales are not clear about when this is likely to come into force but it could be as early as April 2017.

Funding for Supported Housing – Consultation

This consultation concerns how supported housing will be funded in the future in light of the fact that the Local Housing Allowance cap will apply to all tenants in supported and sheltered housing from April 2019. This funding is critical to Wirral's proposals to expand its Extra-care provision in the borough and the outcome of this consultation will inform how this programme progresses.

While housing costs will continue to be paid through the benefit system up to LHA level, there will be a local authority top-up, with ring-fenced funds transferred across from the Department for Work and Pensions and allocated by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Government believes a different system needs to be worked out for short-term transitional services and it will consult on this. The 1% rent cut will apply to supported and sheltered housing from April 2017 for the next three years with the exception of refuges, alms houses and co-ops. There will not be a shared accommodation rate for supported housing, just the one-bedroom LHA rate.

The consultation seeks views on the design of the government's new housing costs funding model for supported housing, as well as views on how funding for emergency and short term placements should work. The consultation seeks view on fair access to funding and the detailed design of the ring fence of the top-up fund and whether other protections are needed for particular client groups to ensure appropriate access to funding, including for those without existing statutory duties.

The new model will give local authorities in England an enhanced role in commissioning supported housing in their areas. In addition, local partnerships could combine this funding with existing care, support and supervision funding to commission services. This could be helpful in encouraging local authorities to consider all supported housing funding in the round. It should incentivise efficiencies and join up existing care and support funding.

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

Funding for Supported Housing – Consultation (Cont.)

Providers have told DCLG that within a localised funding model they would prefer a degree of standardisation with regards to the administration of a local top-up as well as the underpinning framework for reaching a funding decision – for example, via a national statement of expectations or a national commissioning framework. This is particularly important for larger providers who operate across many different local areas and would welcome a degree of standardisation and consistency.

While DCLG are confident that the local top-up model will meet the needs of the majority of the sector, they recognise some particular challenges, such as the monthly payment of Universal Credit, which may remain for very short term accommodation, including hostels and refuges. They will work with the sector to develop further options to ensure providers of shorter term accommodation continue to receive appropriate funding for their work.

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Communities and Local Government are currently running an open consultation looking into new funding models for supported housing. The areas covered in the consultation are: devolved top-up funding to local authorities in England and funding for emergency and short term supported housing placements across Great Britain.

The consultation closes on 13th February 2017 at 12am and can be accessed [here](#).

LEISURE AND CULTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

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

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will review the borough's leisure and cultural offer to make it fit for the future, and optimise the use of public spaces, parks and gardens across Wirral as community assets.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral Leisure Strategy Priorities: 1. Promote and celebrate Wirral's parks, coast and countryside for leisure activities 2. Encourage people to take part in sports, leisure and social activities 3. Increase pride in Wirral's communities and encourage more residents to volunteer

Wirral Culture Strategy Priorities: 1. Develop creative partnerships and a cultural events programme to promote arts, culture and heritage in Wirral 2. Increase resident and visitor participation in Wirral's arts, culture and heritage offer to promote its educational, social and wellbeing benefits 3. Promote Wirral on a global stage as part of the Liverpool City Region to attract world class arts, culture and heritage events and exhibitions 4. Maximise the contribution of the arts, culture and heritage to the local economy.



Leisure and Culture Opportunities for all



Associated Legislation:

Betting Licences Bill (Category B2 Gaming Machines) [HL]

Second Reading Debate Stage: The first reading of the Bill took place on the 13th June. A date for its second reading debate is yet to be scheduled.

Purpose of the Bill is to:

- To make provision for licensing authorities to restrict the number of Category B2 (fruit machines, slot machines) gaming machines which may be authorised under a betting premises licence.

Concerns and Progress so far:

The Bill's content has been published and seeks to update section 172 of the Gambling Act 2005. The specifics of the Bill include that no machine of this category may allow a single charge of more than £10, and that the number of machines in this category must not exceed the number for which the premises holds a licence.

Associated Legislation:

National Citizen Service Bill [HL]

Reporting Stage: The first reading of the Bill took place on the 11th October 2016. The report stage of the Bill took place on the 7th December 2016. After passing third reading in the House of Lords, the Bill's first reading in the House of Commons took place on 14 December 2016. The second reading is due on 16th January 2017.

Purpose of the Bill is to:

- To secure the future of the NCS and make the NCS Trust accountable to Parliament and the public.

Concerns and Progress so far:

National Citizen Service was first piloted in 2011, and involves a group of 15 to 17 year olds undertaking activities together, including residential activities and a community project, over a 2 to 4-week period. The aim is for the participants to develop the skills they needed to be 'active and responsible citizens'; mix with people from different backgrounds; and get involved with their communities. The National Citizens Service Bill seeks to secure the future of the NCS and make the NCS Trust accountable to Parliament and the public. Notable amendments to the Bill thus far include provision for all 15 to 18 year olds to take part in the scheme with a graduation ceremony afterwards and the provision of sufficient funds to allow for young people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part in the scheme. The Bill has achieved cross-bench-support in the House of Lords as peers acknowledged the importance of the NCS Trust's independent status, and the opportunity for more young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds to benefit from the scheme. During the Bill's second reading in the House of Lords, several peers highlighted the importance of local authority engagement and the leadership role of the NCS in strengthening the wider youth sector and breaking down siloed working, in the context of national cuts to the youth and voluntary sector.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Cultural Citizens Programme

[Gov.uk, 09/08/2016](http://Gov.uk,09/08/2016)

Summary- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced on the 9th August 2016 that they would be piloting schemes whereby 600 children from disadvantaged areas will be offered a range of cultural activities including free visits to local plays or behind the scenes trip to galleries and museums, in order to develop a life-long love of the Arts for children who would have otherwise faced difficulty in accessing such activities.

Brief Analysis- Liverpool has been chosen as one of five areas to pilot the scheme which offers children the opportunity to take part in and enjoy the Arts when they maybe wouldn't have been able to otherwise. In Liverpool, the programme is delivered with Working with Curious Minds, and gives 200 local 11-14 year olds the opportunity to engage with cultural organisations, public art, heritage sites and arts festivals. Young people also work with specially trained Culture Coaches to plan extra-curricular visits to festivals, theatres, galleries and museums such as FACT, Liverpool Everyman, Tate Liverpool and Museum of Liverpool. If the pilot schemes prove to be successful, the aim is to roll out the Cultural Citizens Programme across the country in order to explore how arts and cultural organisations can provide disadvantaged young people with cultural experiences and increase local engagement with the Arts.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Sport England: Towards an Active Nation

Sportengland.org, 15/05/16

Summary- Sport England announced on the 19th May 2016 that they were committed to investing £250 million over 5 years in order to tackle low levels of sports participation in the UK. As well as the continued investment to support people who already play sport, the strategy has a much greater emphasis on groups who are typically much less active such as women, disabled people and those from lower-socio-economic backgrounds.

Brief Analysis- The new strategy will see dedicated funding to get children and young people active from the age of five, including a new fund for family based activities and offering training to at least two teachers in every secondary school in England to help them better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability. They have also pledge to introduce, new, more straightforward, application forms to help smaller organisations access funding and encourage more grassroots level sporting activities. Sport England's new strategy is closely aligned with the government's Childhood Obesity Strategy as well as their Sporting Future Strategy, which also aims to also tackle low levels of participation and encourage more grassroots level sporting activities for children of all ages and backgrounds.

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

National Citizen Service Bill

The Bill seeks to establish the National Citizen Service on a more permanent footing with current provision for 16- and 17-year olds in England being extended. As such more Wirral young people and families will have the opportunity to attend NCS Courses.

WIRRAL RESIDENTS LIVE HEALTHIER LIVES

We want all of our residents to have a good quality of life and lead healthy lifestyles in clean and safe environments

Our Pledge Ambition:

We remain committed to addressing health inequalities in Wirral through encouraging residents to lead healthier lifestyles, and promoting physical activity and healthy eating. We will also continue to reduce the prevalence of smoking amongst our residents and the level of alcohol related ill-health and anti-social behaviour through restricting availability of 'super-strength' alcohol. We want to see 30% of Wirral off licences retailers sign up to the council supports 'reduce the strength' campaign.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral Healthier Lives Strategy Priorities: Reduce the number of smokers in Wirral 2. Reduce the impact of alcohol misuse on individuals and communities 3. Promote healthy eating 4. Support local people to take control over their own wellbeing.



Associated Legislation

Soft Drinks Industry Levy

Announced in the 2016 budget as a part of the government's childhood obesity strategy, the tax will impose a levy on soft drinks with more than 5g of sugar per 100ml from April 2018, equating to 24p per litre for the drinks with the highest sugar content.

The purpose of the levy is to:

- To encourage producers and importers to reduce added sugar in soft drinks;
- to promote diet drinks; and
- to reduce portion size of soft drinks

Concerns and progress so far:

The levy has been called for by Public Health England and the British Medical Association for some time as a means to tackle the UK's obesity epidemic, although it has been met with fierce opposition from industry who are now considering legal action to halt the levy. It is thought that the levy will raise £550 million in its first year, with revenues subsequently dropping as producers modify their behaviour. Funds raised will be spent on investing in physical activity and healthy eating initiatives for school children as a means to reduce rates of childhood obesity. Examples include the £10 million investment per year in school breakfast clubs ensuring children get a healthy start to the day, and doubling Primary PE and Sport Premium helping pupils stay active in school.

The specifics of the levy will be set out in the 2017 Finance Bill. The government ran a consultation period for the levy between 18th August and the 13th October, which sought the feedback of industry and health experts.

Associated Emerging Legislation:

Sugar in Food and Drinks (Targets, Labelling, and Advertising) Bill

Second Reading Debate Stage: Bill presented to parliament on the 14th September 2016, with its second reading scheduled for 13th January 2017.

The Purpose of the Bill is to:

- To require the Secretary of State to set targets for sugar content in food and drinks;
- To ensure that added sugar content on food and drink labelling be represented in terms of the number of teaspoonfuls of sugar; and
- To provide for standards of information provision in advertising of food and drinks.

Concerns and progress so far:

As a private members Bill, there is little information about its contents until close to its second reading, due on the 13th January 2017. The Bill is closely aligned with the Soft Drinks Industry levy which aims to change the behaviour of soft drinks producers to improve the health outcomes of individuals.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation

[Gov.uk, 17,12,15](#)

Summary: More than one in four people in England (28%) do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week. In order to increase sports participation and tackle these high levels of inactivity in the UK the Department for Media, Culture and Sport published on the 17th December 2015 their ongoing strategy named Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation. It aims to build on the legacy of London 2012 in order to create a more physically active nation, where children and young people of all ages and backgrounds in particular can enjoy the best sporting opportunities available.

Brief Analysis: The strategy is closely aligned to Sport England's new 'Towards an Active Nation' strategy announced in May 2016, which also seeks to tackle low levels of sports participation. The success of the government's Sporting Future strategy will be judged on its impact on five primary outcomes, which are: physical wellbeing; mental wellbeing; individual development; social and community development; and economic development. Key policies in the strategy largely focus on funding sports at a grassroots levels in order to boost participation, and include a £50 million investment to support Bikeability training for school children and the agreed doubling of Premier League funding for community football over at least the next three seasons. As part of their strategy, Sport England has also pledged to invest £30 million in schemes to encourage volunteering in sports as a means to facilitate grassroots level sporting activities.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action

[Gov.uk, 18/08/16](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/558216/Childhood-Obesity-A-Plan-for-Action.pdf)

Summary: The government announced on the 18th August 2016 their ten year plan for reducing rates of childhood obesity, which currently affects nearly a third of 2 to 15 year olds. The main aims of the strategy are to encourage industry to cut the amount of sugar in food and drinks, and to ensure that primary school children eat more healthily and stay active. The strategy is aligned to emerging legislation such as the planned 'Sugar Tax', or Soft Drinks Industry Levy, the specifics of which will be laid out in the Finance Bill 2017.

Brief Analysis: Alongside The implementation of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, the primary focuses of the strategy will be challenging the foods and drinks industry to reduce sugar content in products by 20% by 2020, making more healthy products available in the public sector, for example in leisure centers or hospitals, supporting those in most need of assistance with the cost of healthy food, establishing a system of clearer food labelling and finally heavily investing in physical activity and healthy eating initiatives in schools, including a £10 million a year investment in school breakfast clubs providing children with a good start to the day, funded by the revenues raised by the Soft Drinks Industry levy.

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

Soft Drinks Industry Levy

Wirral Context

Sugar consumption is as a major factor in childhood obesity. Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) are disproportionately consumed by children and adolescents and are the single biggest source of dietary sugar for children and teenagers. Locally the latest data shows that 22.9% of school children in Reception are overweight or obese rising to 34.4% in Year 6. The consumption of alternative drinks that are lower in sugar can potentially contribute to weight loss. This can indirectly prevent the incidence of other issues associated with obesity such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Excess sugar consumption also negatively impacts on child dental health. Wirral has above average prevalence of decayed, missing or filled teeth in children (aged 0-3) when compared to the rest of England.

Potential Implications

Since the last update the government has published its Childhood Obesity Plan for Action. The soft drinks industry levy is one of a range of actions included within the Plan. The levy, alongside the other actions, will contribute to tackling childhood obesity; diabetes and other cardiovascular conditions as well as to improve dental health. This will also contribute to delivering Wirral's Healthier Lives Strategy.

The levy has a potential dual impact as the revenue generated by the levy will be, it is proposed, invested in primary school PE and sport premium; thereby also potentially improving children's physical activity levels. For those children who are overweight or obese, they will have increased support locally to enjoy physical activity and lose weight. This will also help us to promote a more active culture among children; making a contribution to Wirral's Leisure Strategy.

Continued

In addition to enabling the implementation of the Childhood Obesity Plan for Action at local level it is also important to recognise that the effectiveness of the levy in reducing sugar intake, and consequently contributing to improving health outcomes, will be dependent on a number of factors. These include how producers and retailers respond both in terms of the extent to which manufacturers reformulate drinks, how the tax is either absorbed by producers or passed on to customers and/or if consumer choices change and what they change to. Furthermore, the current proposals for the levy also include a number of exemptions including immunities for small operators, fruit juice and milk based e.g. milkshakes drinks. The design of the tax will therefore be critical in terms of realising the potential health benefits and any contribution to the consultation should address these issues.

The consultation on the levy closed on 13th October 2016. The Director of Health and Wellbeing inputted into the consultation response through the Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Collaborative (Champs) to ensure a consistent technical approach and response from the sub region.

ATTRACTIVE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT FOR WIRRAL RESIDENTS

We are committed to empowering residents to help them create great neighbourhoods where communities are proud of their area and love where they live. We will work with communities to develop locations, taking advantage of assets and local characteristics to create a sense of identity that people can relate to and want to uphold.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We want to increase residents' pride in their local communities, and increase personal responsibility to keep Wirral 'clean and green'. We will listen to local residents and act on their suggestions to ensure more residents see their quality of life improve over the five years of this plan by supporting communities to deal with local environmental issues such as litter, fly-tipping and dog fouling.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral Environment Strategy Priorities: 1. Love where you live
2. Driving behaviour change 3. Put resources where they are needed
4. Tackle untidy land



Associated Legislation:

UK Environmental Protection (Maintenance of EU Standards) Bill

Second Reading Debate Stage: The Bill was presented to Parliament on the 13th July 2016. The Bill's second reading debate has been delayed multiple times, and is now expected to take place on the 13th January 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- To make provision about the safeguarding of standards of environmental protection derived from European Union legislation, including for water, air, soil, flood protection, and climate change, after the withdrawal of the UK from the EU

Concerns and progress so far:

As a private members' Bill, the Bill is currently being prepared for publication ready for its 2nd reading debate on the 16th December, having been delayed. The Bill was well-received by parliament during its first reading, and since there has been development in terms of post-Brexit environmental policy, whereby Theresa May confirmed at the Conservative Party Conference on the 5th October 2016 that the government would still be ratifying the Paris agreement as agreed during the COP21 environmental summit in Paris last December. This signifies a continued commitment to environmental policy post-Brexit.

Associated Legislation:

Clean Air Bill

Second Reading Debate Stage: The Bill was presented to parliament on the 6th November 2016. The second reading debate was expected to take place on the 16th December 2016, but is now expected to take place on the 13th January 2017.

The purpose of the bill is to:

- To set, measure, enforce and report on air quality targets;
- to require that vehicle emissions targets and testing reflect on-road driving conditions;
- to make it an offence to remove permanent devices that reduce vehicle emissions;
- to provide powers for local authorities to establish low diesel emissions zones and pedestrian-only areas;
- to restrict the use of diesel vehicles in urban areas; and
- to make provision about the promotion of electric and hydrogen powered vehicles and for the development of sustainable public, private and commercial transport by road, rail, air and sea.

Concerns and progress so Far

As a private members' Bill, the Bill is currently being prepared for publication in advance of its 2nd reading debate on the 16th December. If passed and made law, it will be incorporated into a new Clean Air Act, updating current legislation which is 60 years old. A new Clean Air Act would include provisions to make public transport, cycling or walking the easiest option for urban journeys and a funded diesel vehicle scrappage

Associated Legislation:

Vehicle Noise Limits (Enforcement) Bill

Second Reading Debate Stage: The Bill was presented to parliament on the 4th July 2016. The second reading debate was initially expected to take place on the 2nd December 2016, but has now been delayed to the 13th January 2017.

The purpose of the bill is to:

- Make provision for the enforcement of noise limits for vehicles via automatic monitoring equipment

Concerns and progress so Far

As a private members' Bill, the Bill is currently being prepared for publication in advance of its 2nd reading debate on the 2nd December. At present, vehicle noise limits are defined by Regulations 55-57 of the Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986, with breaches of these limits punishable by fine. This Bill seeks to ensure that enforcement of these limits can occur using the existing vehicle enforcement network.

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

UK Environmental Protection (Maintenance of EU Standards) Bill 2016-17

The Bill will have a number of implications for the Council. The full details of these implications will not be available until the Bills second reading and debate to Parliament. Therefore detailed implications for Wirral Council in relation to this Bill will continue to be monitored and included in the next Policy Inform papers produced for Overview and Scrutiny Committees in March 2017.

Clean Air Bill 2016-17

The Bill will have a number of implications for the Council. The full details of these implications will not be available until the Bills second reading and debate to Parliament. Therefore detailed implications for Wirral Council in relation to this Bill will continue to be monitored and included in the next Policy Inform papers produced for Overview and Scrutiny Committees in March 2017.

Vehicle Noise Limits (Enforcement) Bill

The Bill will have a number of implications for the Council. The full details of these implications will not be available until the Bills second reading and debate to Parliament. Therefore detailed implications for Wirral Council in relation to this Bill will continue to be monitored and included in the next Policy Inform papers produced for Overview and Scrutiny Committees in March 2017.

COMMUNITY SERVICES ARE JOINED UP AND ACCESSIBLE

We are already integrating public sector and community services to make sure they are fully joined up, but 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.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will enable our already thriving communities to realise their full potential and unlock the skills and expertise within them to deliver more for themselves.

Associated Legislation or Associated Emerging Policy:

At present there are no policy or legislative developments associated with this pledge. We will continue to monitor any developments in legislation or emerging policy.



WIRRAL'S NEIGHBOURHOODS ARE SAFE

Unfortunately, the actions of a small minority can have a negative impact on the majority of residents. We are increasing our efforts to quickly and effectively deal with anti-social behaviour, including street drinking and neighbourhood noise issues.

Our Pledge Ambition:

Over the next five years we will place a greater emphasis on activities which will positively engage young people and communities to prevent anti-social behaviour, and support people that have been affected. We will also look at improving potential licensing and planning enforcement powers.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral Safer Neighbourhoods Strategy Priorities: 1 Build stronger and more confident communities where people feel safe. 2. Improve Community Safety by tackling the cause and impact of crime and anti-social behaviour. 3. Protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities. 4. Deliver greater integration with all relevant partner agencies to achieve a Safer Wirral.



Associated Legislation:

Policing and Crime Bill

Reporting stage: The Bill was presented to Parliament on February 10, 2016. It passed through Parliament and has passed through the first two readings and Committee stage in the House of Lords. Final changes were made to the bill during the third reading on 19 December. The Bill will now go to the Commons for consideration of Lords amendments.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

1. To make provision for collaboration between the emergency services in order to make services more effective and efficient.
2. Overhaul the police complaints system so that the public have confidence in the police and highest standards of integrity are adhered to.
3. More protections to people under investigations and children and young people from sexual exploitation.
4. Refining police powers under the Mental Health Act.

Concerns and progress so far:

Concerns raised in the Lords debate over aspects of the Bill. The mental health aspect of the Bill, supported in principle, needs to be appropriate commission and provision. LGA supports this and backs Amendment 190 calling for funding to ensure additional places of safety. Concerns from the Lords that the Bill didn't go far enough in making retired police officers accountable for their actions, more has to be done to remove the public perception that officers who have left policing evade accountability. Amendments are to be considered during Report Stage.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Fund Unveiled for 'sink estates'

[LocalGov , 11/01/2016](#)

Summary- The Government launched a £140 million fund to regenerate run down, 'sink' estates. The estates, which have been neglected over the years, have high levels of anti-social behaviour and gang crime. The scheme will transform estates or demolish them and replace them. Around 100 run down estates have been targeted for improvements.

Brief Analysis- It is believed that by regenerating the estates they can become thriving communities again leading to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Discussions and research around street furniture and anti-social behaviour

[LocalGov , 01/11/2016](#)

Summary- Local authorities and partners have been researching the impact of street furniture on anti-social behaviour. Research has found that street furniture contributes to the character, appearance and perception of a location, therefore when it is subjected to vandalism or anti-social behaviour it can change the entire population of an area, making people feel unsafe and on edge.

Brief Analysis- Some councils are reviewing whether to rethink the design of their streets in order to reduce anti-social behaviour. Research found that when furniture was placed in areas out of the way or neglected, it appeared to invite vandalism. However when councils planned the environment so furniture blends seamlessly into public spaces people spent more time there and less vandalism occurred. By attempting to create an area that inspires a sense of community, research has shown, a reduction in anti-social behaviour can occur.

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Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 31 January 2017

REPORT TITLE:	Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme Update
REPORT OF:	The Chair of the Committee

REPORT SUMMARY

This report explains the process of developing and managing the scrutiny work programme for the municipal year. The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in cooperation with the other two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which are within the remit of the Committee.

The report provides an update regarding progress made since the last Committee meeting held on 30th November. The current work programme is made up of a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports. This provides the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. Members are requested to approve the proposed Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2016/17, making any required amendments, including suggestions for additional items.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

To ensure members of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not Applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

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?

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

3.3 DELIVERING THE WORK PROGRAMME

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
- Standing panels
- Evidence days and workshops
- Committee reports provided by officers
- Standing committee agenda items, for example, performance monitoring and financial monitoring
- Spotlight sessions

During the municipal year, regular work programme review sessions will be held between the Chairs and Spokespersons of the Committee in order to effectively manage the work programme. This will help to ensure that higher priority topics are given greatest prominence on the work programme as it progresses and is modified during the year.

3.4 UPDATE ON CURRENT SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

3.4.1 Budget Scrutiny 2017/18

A Cabinet report of 8th December presented a proposed budget for 2017/18 as part of the four year Financial Strategy to 2020/21.

The Chair and Party Spokespersons prioritised a number of budget proposals that were detailed in the report for further scrutiny as part of a dedicated workshop. A workshop has now been held with relevant officers being invited to provide an overview on each budget proposal and to answer questions. A report capturing Member comments on these proposals is included on this agenda.

3.4.2 Modern Slavery Act Scrutiny Review

A scrutiny review panel has been agreed comprising Councillors Brightmore, Carubia, McManus, Muspratt and Pilgrim. A scoping meeting has been scheduled for February 2017.

3.4.3 Flood Risk Standing Panel

It is intended that the draft Terms of Reference and a schedule of meetings for the Flood Risk Standing Panel will be presented to Committee at its March meeting for review and approval.

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 Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Work programme

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

AGENDA ITEMS – Tuesday 31st January 2017

Item	Format	Officer
Presentation from Magenta Housing Association on Impact of Welfare Reform	Presentation / Report	Magenta Housing Association
Housing Strategy	Presentation	David Ball
Homelessness Update Report	Officer Report	Sheila Jacobs
Budget Scrutiny Workshop Report	Report	Report of the Chair
Policy Inform	Report	Policy Team
Work Programme Update	Report	Report of the Chair
Deadline for reports to be with Committee Services: Monday 16th January 2017		

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS – Tuesday 28th March 2017

Item	Format	Officer
Performance monitoring – 2016/17 Q3	Report	Performance Team / Mark Smith
Financial monitoring	Report	Peter Molyneux to provide report
Work Programme Update	Report	Report of the Chair
Deadline for reports to be with Committee Services: Monday 13th March 2017		

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED

Item	Format	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Wirral's Residents Live Healthier Lives Strategy	Committee Report / Presentation	TBC	TBC
Wirral's Neighbourhoods are Safe Strategy	Committee Report / Presentation	TBC	TBC
Wirral's Waste Management Strategy	Committee Report / Presentation	TBC	TBC
Wirral's Loving our Environment Strategy	Committee Report / Presentation	TBC	TBC
Third Sector Strategy	Committee	TBC	TBC

	Report / Presentation		
Volunteering Strategy	Committee Report / Presentation	TBC	TBC
Coastal Strategy Scrutiny Review follow-up report	Officer Report	TBC	TBC

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Departmental Officer	Progress / Comments
Transforming Wirral – review of Community Safety outline business case	Workshop	September 2016	Mark Camborne	Complete. Report to Environment OSC – 21/09/16
Flood Risk Standing Panel (potential merger with existing flood risk partnership)	Standing Panel	2017	Mark Camborne	Terms of Reference to be approved by Committee
Modern Slavery Act	Task & finish group	Commence February 2017	TBC	Scoping Meeting scheduled
The Number of Councillors (response to NoM)	Task & finish group	Commence October 2016	TBC	Complete. Referred to Cabinet 16/01/17
Libraries (deferred pending outcome of internal review)	Task & finish group	TBC	TBC	
Transforming Wirral – further business cases	Workshops	TBC	TBC	
Budget Scrutiny	Workshop	January 2017	N/A	Complete. Report to Environment OSC 31/01/17