

CABINET

Monday, 30 September 2019

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	P Hackett (Chair)	Leader of the Council
	Councillors	E Grey C Jones T Jones A Leech C Spriggs T Usher S Whittingham J Williamson	Environment and Climate Change Adult Care Health and Wellbeing Regeneration and Growth The Local Plan Culture and Tourism Children Families and Education Housing and Planning Finance and Resources
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillor	J McManus	Community Services

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Julie McManus.

28 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

29 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

30 EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

RESOLVED:

That the following Key Decisions taken under delegated authority from the period 22 August 2019 (date of publication of last Cabinet agenda) to date be noted:

- **Wirral Growth Company**

Decision Maker: Leader of the Council

Date of decision: 3 September 2019

Effective from: 11 September 2019

- **Highway Structural Maintenance Programme 2019/20 – Additional Key Route Network Allocation**

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date of decision: 6 September 2019

Effective from: 14 September 2019

- **Acceptance of Tender and Award of Contract – Garden Waste Composting Service**

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date of decision: 6 September 2019

Effective from: 14 September 2019

31 **WIRRAL COUNCIL PLAN 2025**

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced a report by the Chief Executive. The Wirral Council Plan 2025 was appended to the report for consideration and it was recommended that it be referred to the Council for consideration at its meeting scheduled for 14 October 2019.

The Cabinet noted that the Council Plan was:

- a high-level summary of the outcomes that the Council wanted to achieve by 2025;
- the key activity and priorities that the Council would deliver this year 2019/20; and
- the start of the Council's process for further engagement and consultation with staff, residents and partners on what needed to be done collectively to achieve the Council's ambitions for the Borough.

The Cabinet also noted that the Council Plan was a key organisational policy document and was, therefore, vital for the Council's development in the coming years. Therefore, no other options were considered at the meeting.

Councillor Hackett reported that this was the final draft of the Plan and final comments were requested so that any amendments could be made before it was presented to the Council for adoption. It was a five-year Plan with clear deliverables for this year 2019/20. Adopting the Plan would enable the Council to begin to shape the future partnership plan and the views of partners and stakeholders would be sought over the coming months.

Councillor Hackett also reported that the Plan set out the Council's ambitions for its residents in the year ahead and beyond. Those issues that residents contacted Members about on a regular basis were the matters the Council was determined to tackle in order to improve the quality of life for Wirral Council's constituents. Issues including good working streetlights, ensuring repairs were carried out, safer streets, ensuring that they were kept clean and the roads kept in great condition, waste bins emptied on a regular basis, fly tipping tackled were just some of the things residents expected to happen and quite rightly demanded.

This Plan would ensure that residents were able to hold the Council to account over the next year and beyond. The Plan was grounded in reality. It was based on what residents had told Members and it was based on a realistic and achievable goal to improve the quality of life in the Borough.

Within the Plan there were a number of key outcomes e.g.

- a prosperous and inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations;
- a cleaner greener Borough that celebrates, protects and is an improved environment and urgently tackles the environment emergency;
- a brighter future for young people and families regardless of their background or where they live;
- safe vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families; and
- services which help people live happy healthy independent lives with public services there to support them when they need them.

Councillor Hackett informed that he had recently attended the Council Leadership Conference where he had stressed the importance of putting residents at the heart of everything the Council did and going the extra mile to help solve issues no matter how big or how small. Some Council staff were fantastic and did go to great lengths to help people every day. This needed to be the norm right across the Council. The Plan had a route map and there was determination to achieve this. Changing the culture and the way the Council delivered services was at the centre of the Plan and Councillor Hackett asked everyone to get behind it to ensure the Council delivered great services for its residents.

Councillor Chris Jones reported that she had been involved from the start with the Wirral 20/20 Pledges and the Council had increased its partnership working over that time. Previous to that everyone was working in their own little silos. As a Cabinet Member she had three pledges and she had spent hours working on them and the difference in the way the Council now worked with its health partners and private providers had made a massive difference. Councillor Jones informed that she would like to see exactly what had been achieved at the end of the 20/20 Plan. It had formed a new basis for the new Plan. She was glad to see that the public consultation would commence shortly because telling Members what they wanted the Council to do and the Council doing it was really important.

Councillor Janette Williamson thanked the officers for all of the hard work they had done on the Plan. She was pleased to see an inclusive community based local economy strategy was going to underpin the Council's Local Plan and the Council's Community Bank initiative tied in very much with that strategy. The Council had recognised that mainstream economics had let people in the Borough down in the past. The Council was now proactive in promoting more community wealth and this was included in the Plan.

Councillor Anita Leech agreed with Councillor Jones that the 20/20 Plan had provided the Council with a good base on which to work in partnership. Members had been told by local people that they felt as though their voices had not been heard and they still had issues with roads, streetlights etc. She considered that the Plan was a real step change to listen to the people.

RESOLVED:

That the Wirral Council Plan be referred to the Council for consideration at its ordinary meeting scheduled for 14 October 2019.

32 **PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – CREATIVE COMMUNITIES**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing introduced the Public Health Annual Report (PHAR) 2019, an independent annual report of the Director of Public Health and a statutory requirement.

It was reported that engaging with cultural activities was good for everyone; it helped people to recover from illness, both physical and mental and protected against it; preventing illness and keeping people well no matter how young or old they were.

The 2019 Report, Creative Communities, explored the role of culture as a means of improving health and wellbeing, presented local examples of those benefits and called for everyone in Wirral to be part of a Borough of Culture legacy that left people happier and healthier.

The Cabinet noted that the PHAR was an important vehicle to identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and inform local inter agency action. The purpose of the PHAR was to draw attention to local issues of importance which had an impact on population health. Since the Council took back responsibility for Public Health in 2013 it had published five reports on:

- Social isolation
- Healthy schools and children
- Domestic violence
- The roles of the Council and NHS in promoting health and wellbeing
- Problem gambling

The Cabinet was informed that these reports had led to action in the reduction of people smoking in the Borough to levels below the national average; increased support for people who were feeling socially isolated plus significant activity across a range of partners to highlight and reduce the damage caused to local communities from alcohol abuse and gambling.

The 2019 Report sought to influence the developing narrative around social prescribing and how the Council engaged and worked with local people to support them to live healthier lives.

This matter was not a key decision but did affect all the Wards within the Borough.

Councillor Chris Jones thanked the Interim Director for Health and Wellbeing and her staff for the hard work they had put into the report. She informed that the Council wanted to see a legacy from the Borough of Culture which would impact on health and wellbeing going forward. The case studies in the report had showed the impact the cultural activities had. The Borough of Culture had been fantastic and had brought a number of people together.

Councillor Jones informed that one thousand residents participated in the sofa session talking about culture and creativity and their own health and wellbeing. The report would hopefully inspire and energise individuals and encourage increased collaboration between different disciplines and organisations. The third sector had had a fantastic impact on this work.

Councillor Chris Spriggs emphasised the importance of the health and wellbeing aspects of the work that had been done. Arts and creativity had provided a positive impact on individuals and on communities for a whole range of reasons. People were much more knowledgeable now and there were many ways creativity was used to help people with their mental health and with social isolation connecting better and celebrating community pride. Councillor Spriggs reported that economically the quality jobs of the future were going to be in the creative and digital sector.

Councillor Spriggs also reported on the first ever Wirral Food and Drink Festival that had been held in Birkenhead Park in September 2019. Over 30,000 people had attended this Festival and the feedback from it had been incredible. People had come together, out in the fresh air to enjoy the food and drink and to listen to music.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations of the Public Health Annual Report 2019 be endorsed and its publication be supported.

33 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO STATUTORY CARE PLANS**

Councillor Tom Usher, who had chaired the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the time when the Statutory Care Plans Scrutiny Review had been carried out, presented a report which set out the findings and recommendations emanating from it. The Review had been undertaken to consider criticism about Care Plans in general and had met with social workers, young people, partner agencies and housing providers. The Cabinet noted that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 3 July 2019 and had supported its content and referred it to the Cabinet for consideration.

Councillor Usher informed that a number of recommendations had been made to the appropriate Cabinet Member who now happened to be himself. He reported that in 2016 when Children's Services were deemed to be inadequate by Ofsted, there had been a need to focus on the quality of care planning and make improvements at pace. Consequently, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had set about completing a major piece of work that had run parallel to the improvement journey. It took over ten months to complete.

In 2016 Ofsted had identified that case recording was sometimes poor and good practice standards had not been communicated clearly. Overview and Scrutiny Members had spoken to thirty professionals who had been involved in the lives of children in care and who had a part to play in the effectiveness of these care plans. These included foster carers and service users. Members had also spoken to young people about their experience of being in care. The Review had been purposely long which meant that Members had seen a lot of improvements being made before they had actually got to the end of the review process.

Councillor Usher reported that in 2019 Ofsted had found that care had improved in all areas. With regard to care planning Ofsted had stated that children in care now benefited from stronger systems and that care planning meetings were held regularly and supported the progress. There had been a shift in the care quality. However, there had been, in total, nineteen recommendations set out in the report and he was minded to accept all of them. There were a substantial amount of issues that required improvement.

Councillor Usher thanked all of the professionals and especially the Children in Care Council who had given up their time to help Members pick out some issues with the care planning process so that improvements could be made quickly.

Councillor Anita Leech commented that there appeared to have been a great deal of work gone into the Scrutiny Review and the resulting report was very good.

Councillor Janette Williamson thanked Councillor Usher for the work he had carried out in respect of the Scrutiny Review: she also thanked his predecessor, former Councillor Bernie Mooney and the Director of Children's Services for their contributions.

Councillor Williamson was of the view that Children's Services had performed exceptionally well to make the necessary progress and she was pleased to see that the recommendations were being accepted by the current Portfolio Holder. She asked Councillor Usher to provide the Cabinet with regular progress updates as they would be very helpful.

Councillor Usher responded by informing that measuring the recommendations was very important and that he would welcome further scrutiny at an appropriate time to ascertain exactly what progress had been made. There had been progress or completion in respect of almost all of the recommendations so far. One example was with the recommendation that 'steps should be taken to ensure foster carers are treated professionally'. Councillor Usher reported that the training and the support offer for Wirral's foster carers had been revamped and there had been quite a substantial increase in the number of people registering as foster carers. This was being taken as a sign of the improvements being made.

RESOLVED:

That the contents and recommendations of the Scrutiny Report, 'Statutory Care Plans' be supported.

34

APPROVAL OF REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME FOR WIRRAL – JULY 2019

Councillor Anita Leech introduced a report by the Strategic Leadership Team that recommended that the Council approve revisions to the future timetable for the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan, as set out in the revised Local Development Scheme appended to the report which would replace the Local Development Scheme adopted by the Council on 6 March 2018.

The approval of the Local Development Scheme was a Key Decision requiring the approval of the Council.

The Cabinet was informed that it had become necessary to review the Local Development Scheme because of changes to the timetable for the Local Plan; the expanded scope of the Local Plan, which would now be produced as a single document, containing both strategic and non-strategic policies; and changes to legislation governing the review of Local Plans. The Cabinet on 17 December 2018 had resolved that a revised Local Development Scheme be submitted for approval by the Council once the amended future timetable had been determined (Minute 47 refers).

The revised timetable for the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan, set out within the revised Local Development Scheme, would contribute towards the delivery of a wide range of Wirral Plan pledges related to People, Business and the Environment and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

There were no alternative options available for the Cabinet to consider as the national regulations required the publication of an up-to-date Local Development Scheme, as soon as possible after the information became available.

Councillor Leech reported that the Council was now pressing ahead with the Local Plan and Members had received updates and briefing sessions as matters had progressed. The report set out the time frame which was extremely tight but in line with the Secretary of State's letter to the Council in January 2019.

Councillor Pat Hackett congratulated Councillor Leech and the officers on the hard work that had gone in to the production of the Local Plan, one of the Council's big priorities. He informed that the Council was on course to meet the deadline laid down.

RESOLVED:

That the Council be recommended to:

- (1) approve the adoption of the revised Local Development Scheme attached to the report; and**
- (2) subject to the approval of (1) above, agree that the revised Local Development Scheme comes into effect on the day following the date that the Council resolution is passed.**

35 TRANMERE ROVERS PARTNERING AGREEMENT

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report by the Director of Finance and Investment that informed that Tranmere Rovers Football Club had a long and successful history of working in partnership with the Council to deliver commissioned services on behalf of the Council - and to deliver services that were not commissioned or paid for by the Council, but supported the delivery of beneficial outcomes to Wirral residents.

It was reported that the current relationship and communication channels with the Club were dispersed across the organisation, as individual officers were responsible for individual parts of the work commissioned from the Club. This did not provide for a whole view of the relationship the Council had with the Club, as one of its trusted partners, and the work that the Club did to support the delivery of critical Council functions, commissioned and non-commissioned.

The establishment of a Partnering Agreement set out the Council's ambition to work with the Club on a more holistic basis and recognised their contribution to community activities and programmes to support vulnerable people. It also set out how both partners would work together for the benefit of Wirral residents and the Wirral economy.

The Cabinet was informed that in 2016 the Club had created an international business arm, forming an official partnership with the Inner Mongolian Chinese Government to grow football as a sport in China. The Club had been named as a key strategic partner in developing campus football in Inner Mongolia, the pilot province for football development. Subsequently, this business had expanded into international activities in North America, Indonesia, Australia and other provinces in China.

Members noted that the Club had delivered five coach education courses - in line with The Football Association international coaching badge - which had brought just under 150 Inner Mongolian coaches to Wirral. As a result of this, the Club had estimated that its international activities had contributed over £500,000 to the local economy.

This open and transparent way of working together provided an opportunity for fans, the public, members and investors to see the value that the Club brought to the area, as a community asset, in one place.

The Cabinet noted that the alternative option was to decide not to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Tranmere Rovers and to continue with the current relationship with the Club. The current relationship was based on individual commissioned projects that were not consolidated into one place. This meant there was no oversight of the commissioned and non-commissioned activity provided by the Club for the benefit of the Wirral community.

Appended to the report was the Partnership Agreement.

Councillor Williamson informed the Cabinet that Tranmere Rovers was more than just a football club. It was embedded in the heart of the community and for years had delivered on a lot of the Council's public health outcomes. Since Mark Palios had become the Club's Executive Chairman he had accelerated the programme and had added a lot of social value to the Borough. The Partnering Agreement was a professional approach and a way of formalising the arrangements between the Council and the Club.

Councillor Williamson reported that Mr Palios had attended an Overview and Scrutiny Committee recently and had been warmly received by Members of all political groups and the Partnering Agreement signalled the Council's intention to go forward and continue to work with Tranmere Rovers and to actually expand and grow its relationship with the Club.

Councillor Anita Leech informed that no one should underestimate the amount of work the Club had carried out within the local community and in particular, the work it did with children who had been excluded from schools and their attendance rates. It was quite phenomenal that 98% of Wirral's young people were actually completing the courses and she further informed that in the presentation that Mr Palios had made to Members he had indicated that these youngsters who did not want to attend school were saying to him, during the actual school holidays, can we come to the Club and do something. This was a complete and utter turn around. What the Club was doing in the community was great and it was fantastic that the arrangements were now being formalised because there had been a number of strands of work that Tranmere Rovers had been doing for the Council and this Agreement brought it all together so that it was clear, precise and transparent.

RESOLVED:

That the Partnering Agreement between Wirral Council and Tranmere Rovers Football Club be endorsed.

36 **NORTH WEST MUTUAL COMMUNITY BANK**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report by the Director of Finance and Investment which informed the Cabinet that local authorities had a role to play in shaping regional financial services as part of their policies and partnerships. These policies and partnerships supported residents, developed local economies and met strategic objectives for promoting economic development; and also supporting small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) business growth and financial inclusion for all members of the Wirral community.

The Cabinet noted that the current UK banking institutions and infrastructure did not provide a diverse and inclusive financial service. Many individuals and businesses had been excluded from a basic banking offer, as they were considered unprofitable or too risky, within the standard banking business model. In the Wirral environment, this had been noticeable in multiple branch closures, withdrawal of free to use ATMs and increased reliance on a digital offer.

The impact of this had been keenly felt by the most vulnerable individuals and businesses. Reduced access to basic banking services had increased costs, placed unfair limitations when accessing other services / products and had reduced social mobility.

Councillor Williamson reported that a growing number of local authorities were now investing in community banks, challenger banks and other initiatives outside the mainstream financial services sector to help meet their local priorities. Wirral and other authorities in Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside (the North West) had the opportunity to support the setting up of a regional bank called the North West Mutual (NWM) Bank.

The Cabinet was informed that the Community Savings Bank Association, registered with the Financial Conduct Authority was seeking to develop 19 regional community banking models across the UK, with London and the South West already in the pipeline and Wales and some other regions following close behind.

Prior to and once established, the Bank would need to approach potential social investors and regional anchor institutions, that shared the social and economic ethos of the mutual, to invest circa £20m of the share capital required. The Cabinet noted that it was intended to hold a potential investor day together with Liverpool and Preston Councils, once the appointment of the banking expert had been made.

It was noted that a due diligence exercise would review the case to establish a North West Regional Community Bank (The Bank) creating a regional community bank for the North West of England covering Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside.

The Cabinet also noted that the Council could use due diligence information that Regional Partners provided in conjunction with internally-sourced demographic information. This had not been explored further as the scale and reach of the project would benefit from an expert approach, and provide greater insight in specific requirements for Wirral residents and businesses.

This matter affected all Wards within the Borough and was a key decision.

Appended to the report was:

- Appendix A - Background to CSBA and recent history of Regional Mutual Banks; and
- Appendix B – A detailed analysis of Wirral Demographic Financial Inclusion.

Councillor Williamson told the Cabinet that the Community Bank was, and would probably remain, her proudest achievement, as a politician. It was ground breaking and exciting and she felt privileged to be leading on it and being involved with it all. £5m had been included in the Capital Programme to invest in a Community Bank where the Council had partnered with both Liverpool and Preston City Councils.

Councillor Williamson sought the Cabinet's agreement to draw down a small amount of that money in order to undertake a due diligence exercise which would advise the Council on the case for a North West Community Bank. Due diligence provided intelligence by looking at the customer base and potential community reach risks could be more easily identified, quantified and mitigated when it came

to making the bigger investments. Councillor Williamson had no doubt that the Council would go on to make the final investment. There were a large number of Wirral residents that had been completely let down by high street banks. They have been financially excluded. They did not have a branch to go to and often they could not get a bank account because they were on a very low income. Banks were not in the business of helping people, they were there simply to make money from them and unfortunately, a lot of Wirral residents were not the kind of customers that banks were interested in.

Councillor Williamson reported that the Community Bank was Labour values in action, helping people who had been excluded from the mainstream. It would help small businesses and sole traders, another part of the Council's community wealth building strategies to build wealth up from grassroots. The bank would keep the profits on the Wirral, they would be ploughed back into the Borough and people would be helped to grow their businesses that had hitherto been unable to do so because high street banks would not lend them any money. This was an enormously progressive policy and Councillor Williamson was really proud of it.

Councillor Anita Leech informed that due diligence was a very important and essential tool for moving forward with this very exciting project and that she was in agreement with the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Chris Spriggs reported that she had always been supportive of this idea and had been following how successful it had been as a programme in Wirral and she was pleased that the Council was playing its part in doing something really innovative and exciting. There were so many young entrepreneurial people coming forward now, as a result of the Borough of Culture, inspired to set up their own small creative businesses.

Councillor Spriggs informed the Cabinet that she had attended the recent Make Hamilton Grow Party. There were nine tenants already in the building including a local silversmith, a fine artist. They were all small businesses and sole traders. People had come to her with ideas in respect of businesses they wanted to set up. They were about giving back and social good but were creatively based and there was a real synergy there between the Community Bank, culture and creativity, mental health, social wellbeing and social isolation. This was tremendous and Councillor Spriggs was looking forward to seeing what came next.

Councillor Tony Jones added regeneration and growth to Councillor Spriggs' list and informed that he fully endorsed and supported the recommendations. He considered the Community Bank initiative to be a first class example of what he termed as municipal socialism which he considered to be well overdue. Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Williamson for her hard work on this project.

Councillor Liz Grey told the Cabinet that she thought the Community Bank initiative was very exciting and was going to be really life-changing for a lot of

people particularly, some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents. It showed that the Council really cared and was looking after people.

Councillor Pat Hackett informed Members that the Community Bank project would help the Wirral's small and medium sized businesses who needed to access credit, whilst at the same time, bringing banks back to the Borough's high streets at a time when the high streets were really suffering and being told to change and do things differently. This would help them do this. A lot of high streets were now offering more than the traditional shops and things that people were used to. They were offering cultural, creative and digital services now as well and having a high street bank there will help.

Councillor Hackett also informed that at a time when free to use ATMs were being removed from the least affluent areas he considered that community banks would make a big difference. This initiative was trailblazing for the Wirral.

Councillor Williamson reported that in keeping with the Council's community wealth building and social values she was pleased and that the Council had won an award from the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) a few weeks ago at the APSE's National Service Awards for the Best Innovation and Demand Initiative having beaten off competition from several other councils. She thanked the Officer Team for their hard work and asked that her thanks be conveyed back to everyone who had been involved.

Councillor Williamson went on to say that this award recognition was the highlight of an incredibly successful year for this programme. The Council had been recommended at the National Social Value Awards, the Go Procurement Awards and the Local Government Chronicle Awards which demonstrated the invaluable contribution it had made to the lives of young people and the innovative programme that it had developed. This pioneering programme, with enormous long term benefits, showed that the Council working with its supply chain provided opportunities for disadvantaged young people through full time work and apprenticeships. This had enabled young people to feel valued, supported and optimistic about their futures and they have recognised the benefits of full-time employment. This tied in with Councillor Spriggs' comments and Members were beginning to see a fully developed strategy around community, community wealth building, young people and the Council's role. Labour values were embedded in all of this.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the requirement for a North West Mutual Community Bank be endorsed; and**
- (2) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Investment to carry out a due diligence exercise into the establishment of a Community Savings Bank.**

WIRRAL WATERS INVESTMENT FUND - APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Councillor Tony Jones introduced a report by the Economic Development Lead that informed that Peel Investments (Intermediate) Limited (Peel) had applied for a grant from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund (WWIF) of £400,000 to help secure £2,100,000 of funding which had been agreed from the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF). This was in addition to £300,000 of project finance that the Council had already agreed to fund through its capital programme, £100,000 from European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and £300,000 private sector contribution from Peel. The funding would be used to develop green infrastructure and public realm improvements in the Tower Road area of Birkenhead, an existing public highway on land already owned and adopted (maintained by obligation) by the Council.

The 'Civilised Street' works would transform A554 Tower Road through wider pavements, shared surface areas and reduced carriageway widths, and would create some 1km of shared footway / cycle way. It would link to existing and proposed pedestrian / cycle routes and bus stops, facilitating access to wider areas, making Tower Road a high-quality destination for workers, students, residents and visitors accessing the area by these modes.

The 'Green Infrastructure' element of the scheme would see 130 new trees planted, comprising 90 large trees in pits located on grassed areas and 40 large trees in pits located on hard areas.

This scheme would integrate with recent sustainable transport improvements in the Wirral Waters area including recently completed shared footway/cycle ways on Northbank East and Rendell Street. Funding had also been secured via ESIF for the extension of the Northbank East scheme along Northbank West to the Duke Street junction where it would meet with a further STEP funded cycle route. All works in the area including the Tower Road Public Realm scheme were future proofed to accommodate the implementation of a mass transit solution.

These works would enhance the physical environment and accessibility associated with several key development and investment locations including the Wirral Waters Campus of Wirral Metropolitan College, Egerton Square amenity village, Tower Road Office and Maritime Knowledge Hub. Further, the scheme provided direct access linking committed footway and cycle ways to new housing within the Northbank/Tower Road development cluster totalling approximately 1,100 units planned to 2024, with key projects including Wirral Walters One/Legacy, Belong Village and Urban Splash. Tower Road was a key gateway route connecting Wirral Waters with Birkenhead town centre to the south. As such, the application was recognised to be crucial to contributing more widely to the success of the Wirral Waters development area, Woodside Waterfront and Birkenhead Town Centre regeneration initiatives.

The Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision set out the vision for the borough and had economic growth at its heart to ensure residents were able to access good, high paying jobs in a stable and thriving economy. The Plan identified 20 key pledges that the Council, and its partner agencies, must deliver and the application for financial assistance directly supported the following pledges:

- Increase inward investment
- Workforce skills match business needs
- Greater job opportunities
- Thriving small businesses

Councillor Tony Jones reported that a number of other options had been discounted as follows:

- provide a loan rather than grant: An independent appraisal of the application had concluded that the project was not currently viable and therefore required grant funding through WWIF to facilitate development; and
- adopt a 'do nothing' approach: Not providing WWIF funding.

The Cabinet noted that the considerable benefits of this project would not be realised without the introduction of WWIF funding, which existed to support development viability, environmental improvements and infrastructure investment.

This matter affected all Wards within the Borough and was a key decision.

Appended to the report was:

- Appendix 1: Report to Investment and Change Board – Application for Financial Assistance 25 July 2019 EXEMPT (Minute No. 43 Refers)
- Appendix 2: Wirral Waters Investment Fund Package 1 Business Plan (August 2018) EXEMPT
- Appendix 3: Site Location Plan EXEMPT (Minute No. 43 Refers)
- Appendix 4: Risk Register EXEMPT (Minute No. 43 Refers)

Councillor Tony Jones stated that in supporting this project he believed that the Council was delivering on its commitment to bring forward regeneration. It was creating real jobs for Wirral residents, growing the Wirral economy and beginning to realise the Council's vision for the Borough. This was an exciting period of development at Wirral Waters which would include arts, culture, amenity and Grade 'A' office space. This infrastructure was a major part of the jigsaw and progress was now being made. The Wirral Waters project was the largest regeneration project in the UK and it had potential to create thousands of jobs and thousands of new homes.

Councillor Chris Jones informed that it was very exciting, that at long last, this project was moving forward and as a Councillor for the Seacombe Ward she obviously had a vested interest in it. The improvements being made would mean that people would feel safer on the roads, whether cycling or walking, as it was very dark in that area.

Councillor Anita Leech offered her congratulations to Councillor Tony Jones and to the officers who had worked very hard to unlock some of the sites to be redeveloped along with the funds required. The project was now progressing at considerable pace.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham also congratulated everyone for the work involved in respect of the Wirral Waters project so far. On Tower Road two bridges had been replaced in the last five years and there had been other investment in the infrastructure, street scene and the greening of the area. He was looking forward to seeing the finished project.

Councillor Chris Spriggs informed that culture and art was very important to this project. People would spend money at Wirral Waters and this would help the local economy.

Councillor Pat Hackett agreed that Wirral Waters was a very exciting project and, along with all the other 'big ticket issues' and projects the Council was involved with. It was coming together because Members and officers had embraced a new way of working and he congratulated them on that. It had made such a big difference to regeneration. The Council was changing and transforming the face of Wirral. The Docklands and central Birkenhead were being transformed, creating many jobs and new homes, improving peoples' lifestyles and quality of life and would bring a new confidence to the area

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a grant of £400,000 be made to Peel Investments (Intermediate) Limited through the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to support the improvements to public realm in Tower Road, Birkenhead; and**
- (2) the Director of Governance and Assurance be authorised, in consultation with the Director for Economic and Housing Growth, to draw up and sign a legal agreement between the Council and Peel Investments (Intermediate) Limited that is within State Aid regulations and subject to the conditions contained in Appendix 1 to the report. (Minute No. 43 refers.)**

Councillor Tony Jones introduced a report which sought the Cabinet's approval to the Council entering into a PUT/CALL option with Peel Land and Property to enable Peel to nullify the risk of constructing Tower Road South (TRS), a speculative 3,116sq.m Grade 'A' office building on Tower Road South. From a Council perspective this major thoroughfare through Wirral Waters had been identified as providing significant growth opportunities.

The Cabinet was informed specifically that Peel's construction of TRS delivered:

- A BREEAM Excellent rated Grade 'A' office building in the Four Bridges neighbourhood of Wirral Waters;
- Potential to create 280 gross direct and indirect jobs;
- 1 acre of brownfield land developed
- 150 college students assisted in their skills development and;
- Support for the development of the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone by attracting new occupiers to Wirral Waters.

The Cabinet noted that the PUT/CALL arrangement worked by both parties entering into an option agreement that allowed for Peel to require the Council to purchase from them after an agreed period of time (in this case three years from practical completion of TRS) the building at the pre-determined purchase price (the PUT option) or for the Council to require Peel to sell them the property in the same timescale at the pre-determined price (the CALL option). The completed value of the building had been determined by a detailed scheme appraisal carried out by the Combined Authority as part of Peel's application for SIF grant support for TRS. The triggering of the PUT/CALL option was not obligatory on either side and would have a definitive end date for accountancy purposes because, if during the three years post practical completion period, TRS was valued at a sum equal or greater than the PUT option price then the Council's obligation to Peel immediately fell away. Notwithstanding this scenario and depending on valuation Peel could only trigger the PUT option at three years from practical completion of the building. The Council had, however, negotiated the right for it to exercise its CALL option anytime during the three years and without the obligation falling away. This meant that if market conditions strengthened over this period and the value of the completed development increased, the Council had the right to purchase the asset from Peel for the lower predetermined price.

Councillor Jones informed that the strategic case for the acquisition was set out in the report. However, the commercial details of the proposal were contained in the Business Case, attached as Appendix 1. This had been approved by the Investment and Change Board and was exempt from publication due to commercial sensitivity considerations under paragraph 3 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. (Minute No. 44 refers.)

The report informed that there were a number of options available to the Council to secure the construction of TRS. These were set out in Appendix 1, the Business Case.

Councillor Tony Jones reported on the need for investment in Birkenhead and Wirral as a whole. He informed that it was crucial in ensuring that the Council was sending out the right signals that 'Wirral was open for business'. It was expected that the Tower Road South site at Wirral Waters would be one of the first to kick-start regeneration and this would prove to be really significant. The Council now had to capitalise on the opportunity and do all it could to make sure that there was a substantial confidence in the scheme. Financially and from a Council perspective this was really important. The arrangement not only allowed for the regeneration of Tower Road South but also allowed the Council the option of purchasing the building within three years of completion for less than its potential value, at the time.

Councillor Anita Leech thought that it was very important that the Council did kick-start regeneration as it was vital to attract inward investment and to boost the Wirral economy.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham informed that he was pleased to see so much Grade 'A' office space coming forward which was very much needed in Wirral as a whole.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council seek to enter into a PUT/CALL option with Peel Land and Property for the reasons outlined in the Business Case and on terms consistent with the advice contained in Cashman and Wakefield so as to ensure compliance with the rules on State Aid; and**
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Director of Housing and Economic Growth in consultation with the Director: Governance and Assurance to negotiate and agree the terms of the Put/Call option with Peel Land and Property.**

39

TRANSPORT PROFESSIONAL SERVICES - CONTRACT AWARD AND APPOINTMENT OF SPECIALIST ADVISORS TO PROVIDE NETWORK MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced a report that, in accordance with the Council's updated Executive Decision Making process, sought approval to appoint external resources to provide ad-hoc support in the Network Management Service for the delivery of regeneration/growth objectives and to ensure that the Council's statutory obligations in relation to network management and road safety were met.

The Cabinet was informed that an option to do nothing had been considered by officers and rejected as failing to progress and establish a Professional Services Contract would compromise the Council's ability to meet statutory obligations,

deliver Capital Programmes and support the aspirations of the Wirral Growth Company.

The matter was not a Key Decision.

Councillor Hackett reported that safe and well maintained roads were important to every resident, business or visitor to Wirral. They connected people to services, employment, education and healthcare and this was a fundamental part of their daily lives. The Council had significant regeneration plans which were being driven by the newly formed Wirral Growth Company. It therefore, needed expertise in this field to advise and deliver on how networks could be adapted and upgraded to meet increased visitor and investor demand. Specialist advisers allowed the Council greater autonomy to commission high quality, stand-alone project work and also provided the flexibility to change the level of resources to address peaks and troughs in workloads. The proposals set out in the report would work towards improving the transport offer for all residents, businesses and visitors creating a joined up and efficient transport system and making it easier to connect Wirral.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham informed that Wirral had some excellent network management traffic and highways officers working for the Council. However, in the light of the Councils regeneration proposals it needed extra capacity to drive them forward.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of advisors via the Merseytravel Consultancy Services Multi Party Framework Agreement 2019, subject to completion of Contract Procedure Rules, to provide ad-hoc support services in highways development control, traffic management and road safety up to a value of £450,000 as set out in the proposal below be approved:

Proposal

- (1) Procurement of specialist advisor resource be via the Merseytravel Consultancy Services Multi-Party Framework Lot 7. The hourly rates offered through this framework are considered to represent good value for money in the present market. The framework has already been successfully used by Wirral Council for engineering services over the past 14 months and it is likely to offer better value than alternative procurement routes. At this stage it is envisaged that the services may be required up to a maximum total fee value of £450,000 between November 2019 and November 2021, extendable by a further 12 months subject to performance, but there will be no guarantee of the type, timing, quantity or value of work that will be issued through the contract.**

- (2) A mini-competition between interested specialist advisors within the relevant framework lot be administered by the Council's Procurement Team through the Due North electronic tendering portal, The Chest. The competition be on a 50/35/10/5 price/quality/social value/GDPR basis, and be based on an assumed schedule of hours for each staff grade in the framework, generating an indicative price offer, with an optional discount provision, together with a quality statement and social value submission, which will be assessed in accordance with instructions that will be provided at the time of tender invitation and agreed with Procurement colleagues in advance.

40 **CIVIL ENGINEERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES - CONTRACT AWARD AND APPOINTMENT OF SPECIALIST ADVISORS TO PROVIDE CIVIL ENGINEERING SUPPORT - MARK SMITH (CALL OVER - 29/8**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report which informed that, in accordance with the Council's updated Executive Decision Making process, approval was sought to appoint external resource to provide technical support in the Commercial Management Service for the delivery of the Council's Highways and Transport Capital Programme and overall regeneration/growth objectives.

This matter was not a Key Decision.

The Cabinet noted that the option of doing nothing had been considered by officers and rejected because failing to progress and establish a professional services civil engineering services support contract would compromise the Council's ability to meet its statutory obligations, to deliver Capital Programmes, to support the Council Plan, the City Region Network Development Plans and the aspirations of the Wirral Growth Company.

Councillor Janette Williamson informed that the contract provided various specialist services to help the Council to deliver its Highways Capital Programme and other infrastructure needed to drive the agenda forward on regeneration and growth. There would be complete flexibility around the services that the Council would request from the contract which would be mainly financed through the Capital Programme and grants. It was not possible to carry out this work without external support and expertise.

The supplier was a large national company and the service would be run from their Liverpool office and the Council had a good working relationship with the company which provided similar services across the Liverpool City Region. The supplier had offered the Council a very good deal and would provide very good value for money compared to the current market. It had pledged to deliver on significant social value outcomes to the Borough. The social value would be monitored to establish whether or not it was being delivered.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham informed that he was fully in support of providing this additional civil engineering capacity. This would provide a vital resource which the Council could dip in and out of as and when needed.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of a specialist civil engineering services supplier via the Merseytravel Consultancy Services Multi Party Framework Agreement 2019, subject to completion of Contract Procedure Rules, to provide ad-hoc support services in highways-related civil engineering services up to a value of £400,000 as set out in the proposal below be approved:

Proposal

- (1) Procurement of a specialist Civil Engineering services provider be via the Merseytravel Consultancy Services Multi-Party Framework Lot 4. The hourly rates offered through this framework are considered to represent very good value for money in the present market. The framework has been successfully used by the Council's Commercial Management Service for civil engineering services over the past 14 months, and it is likely to offer better value than any alternative procurement routes. At this stage it is envisaged that the services may be required up to a maximum total fee value of £400,000 between October 2019 and October 2020, extendable by a further 12 months, subject to performance and at the Council's sole discretion, but there will be no guarantee of the type, timing, quantity or value of work that will be issued through the contract.**
- (2) A mini-competition between interested specialist advisors within the relevant framework lot has been conducted, administered by the Council's Commercial Management Service through the Merseytravel Framework and the Due North electronic tendering portal, The Chest. The mini-competition has been evaluated on a 50/35/15 price/quality/social value basis, and was based on a hypothetical schedule of hours for each staff grade in the framework, generating an indicative total price offer, with optional discount provision, together with quality statements and social value submission, all of which have been assessed in accordance with the instructions provided at the time of tender invitation, which were agreed with Procurement in advance. The evaluation scores to be checked and moderated by the Council's Procurement and Finance support prior to contract award.**
- (3) The services to be delivered from the successful supplier's own office premises. There are no proposals for the secondment of any staff into the Council under this particular contract. However, the supplier's staff will be required to work closely with Council staff and to regularly attend meetings at Council offices.**

41 REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Councillor Tony Jones introduced a report which sought the Cabinet's approval to provide a grant to enable the company named in Appendix 1 to the report to diversify, expand and create jobs, in line with the objectives of the Council's Business Investment Fund and Wirral Growth Plan.

It was reported that Appendix 1 contained commercially sensitive project and company information. Accordingly, it had been deemed to be exempt from disclosure under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). (Minute No. 45 refers.)

Members noted that applications for Business Investment Funding were considered by the Council's Wirral Waters Programme Board, comprising of senior officers from the Council's Regeneration, Legal, Strategic Transport, Place and Investment and Finance Departments. Applications were assessed against criteria including reviewing the plans and proposals for compliance against the objectives as well as the deliverability of the project and future sustainability. This process included an assessment of outputs in respect of employment opportunities, investment leveraged, and the degree of financial support requested.

The Cabinet was informed that the company had an ambitious business plan for its Bromborough operation, which stated that its main objective over the next three years was 'growth in turnover and diversification of the customer base [to] provide a greater contribution to fixed overheads and so deliver significant profit improvements'.

The company currently employed 121 FTE staff at its Bromborough site. If successful in securing Business Investment Fund, the company had forecasted that they would employ an additional 10 FTE posts by 31 March 2020 and a further 10 posts by 31 March 2021. In delivering this project, the future of the company and the current FTE would be increasingly secure.

The Cabinet noted that grant funding would enable maximum benefits realisation for this project. The applicant had explained that without the grant, it would have to scale back the project to reduce the call on its working capital. The applicant had stated that it was likely that it would not enter into the lease of two additional commercial units in order to free up working capital to repay hire purchase costs. The company would consider building new rooms in its current premises, without recommended upgrades which could jeopardise their industry accreditation.

The offer of financial assistance, if agreed, would be made to the company subject to a legal contract being put in place between the Council and the company as the applicant.

This matter was not a key decision.

Councillor Tony Jones reported that the Council was committed to create an environment where local businesses could and would thrive and grow. The Business Investment Fund accelerated the growth of the Borough's Small and Medium Businesses and created jobs for local residents. It also sent out the right signals that Wirral was open for business. Awarding this grant would support a company with a track record of delivering growth and employment in Wirral to reach new markets and to employ an additional twenty full-time staff in good quality jobs. This was, therefore, a good investment.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a grant in the sum of £181,000 be paid from the date of the signing of the legal agreement, subject to the conditions outlined in the report, towards the business growth project being undertaken by the company named in Appendix 1; and**
- (2) the Director of Governance and Assurance be authorised to draw up and sign a legal agreement between the Council and the business subject to the conditions outlined in the report.**

42 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

43 WIRRAL WATERS INVESTMENT FUND - EXEMPT APPENDICES

RESOLVED:

That further to Minute No 37 above the content of the exempt appendices circulated with the agenda be noted.

44 TOWER ROAD SOUTH OFFICE DEVELOPMENT: PUT/CALL OPTION - EXEMPT APPENDIX

RESOLVED:

That further to Minute No 38 above the content of the exempt appendix circulated with the agenda be noted.

45 REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - EXEMPT APPENDIX

RESOLVED:

That further to Minute No 41 above the content of the exempt appendix circulated with the agenda be noted.