



Cabinet

Date:	Monday, 4 November 2019
Time:	10.00 a.m.
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

This meeting will be webcast at
<https://wirral.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary 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.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting have been printed and published. Any matters called in will be reported at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

LEADER'S UPDATE

3. EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

Key Decisions – taken under delegated powers. Period 20 September 2019 (date of publication of last Cabinet agenda) to date.

NB: No Key Decisions have been actioned by Cabinet Members during this period.

CABINET MEMBER REPORTS

4. **MILTON PAVEMENTS BUSINESS CASE** (Pages 1 - 14)
5. **COUNCIL TAX (EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM)** (Pages 15 - 20)
6. **COUNCIL TAX - REDUCTION SCHEME** (Pages 21 - 26)
7. **MODERN SLAVERY STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL** (Pages 27 - 90)
8. **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

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

9. **MILTON PAVEMENTS BUSINESS CASE (EXEMPT APPENDICES)**
(Pages 91 - 120)

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CABINET

04 NOVEMBER 2019

Growth & Regeneration

Councillor Tony Jones, Cabinet Member, Regeneration & Growth, said:

“We want to create ambitious and prosperous communities.

Given the well reported decline of the high street nationally and a challenging retail market, it is the responsibility of the Council as long term stakeholder and investor to take greater control of the area and ensure that future developments have a positive impact in terms of placemaking and broader regeneration.

Our plans for economic growth are about creating community wealth. They’re about creating opportunities for local people, regenerating our commercial areas and inspiring ambition. Prosperous communities are happier, healthier and better places to live.

This report sets out our initial plans for the much-needed regeneration of Birkenhead’s commercial town centre and beyond. It specifically focuses on our vision and ambition to see Birkenhead, once again, become a thriving town with neighbourhoods of choice and a strong commercial heart, generating footfall and visitors alongside a revitalised retail and leisure provision with new streets and squares.

The regeneration of the town centre is a long-standing priority for the Council and was the original backdrop to the formation of the Wirral Growth Company.”

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval of a strategic acquisition of property by the Council (referred here to as ‘Milton Pavements’) in the heart of Birkenhead town centre and approval to the incorporation of this site into the Wirral Growth Company Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Option Agreement on appropriate terms at an appropriate time. Acquiring and assembling this land will contribute significantly towards town centre regeneration aspirations

The report also seeks approval for a key, council owned, neighbouring site, Birkenhead Market building, to be transferred into the Wirral Growth Company Option Agreement on appropriate terms and subject to approval of the LLP. Also, for approval that the site referred to as ‘Allport Lane - Bromborough’ be removed from the Wirral Growth Company Option Agreement in line with the Board decision of the LLP.

The regeneration of the town centre is a long-standing priority for the Council and is reflected in The Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision. This sets out the vision for the borough and has economic growth at its heart to ensure residents are able to access good, high paying jobs in a stable and thriving economy. The Plan identifies 20 key pledges that the Council, and its partner agencies, must deliver and the proposals in this report directly supports the following pledges:

- Increase inward investment
- Greater job opportunities
- Thriving small businesses

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

The decision is a key decision.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

This report contains exempt information in the Appendices as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is in the public interest to exclude the press and public under Paragraph 3 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).

Appendix 1 includes the full business case for the purchase of Milton Pavements and is commercially sensitive.

Appendix 2 includes the heads of terms for the purchase of Milton Pavements and is commercially sensitive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1 Approve the Full Business Case for the acquisition of the land and rights of Milton Pavement and unit 13-15 at St Werburgh's Square thereby agreeing in principle for the Council to purchase these sites.
- 2 Thereby authorise the Director of Economic and Housing Growth, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Investment to finalise the purchase of the sites on terms that are substantially in accordance with the draft Heads of Terms set out at Appendix 2, noting that the Heads of Terms contains a number of conditions that must be satisfactorily met before the purchase can be deemed unconditional.
- 3 Agree that, once 'Milton Pavements' is acquired, this asset can be incorporated into the LLP Option Agreement on appropriate terms subject to approval of the LLP and the outcomes of consultation on regeneration plans.
- 4 Agree that, once 'Milton Pavements' is acquired, this asset subject to planning permission and surveys can be demolished subject to the outcome of consultation on the regeneration plans.
- 5 Agree that the Council owned Birkenhead Market site can be incorporated into the LLP Option Agreement on appropriate terms and subject to the outcome of consultation on the regeneration plans.
- 6 Agree that the site referred to as 'Allport Lane - Bromborough' be removed from the LLP Option Agreement.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Milton Pavements

- 1.1 Milton Pavements is situated at the heart of Birkenhead town centre and therefore forms a key site in respect of enabling any future redevelopment of the town centre to take place. A plan outlining the site is attached as Appendix 3. The current owners of this asset, the Mars Pension Trustees Limited (Mars Pension Fund) are looking to reduce the number of retail units in the town centre as a number are empty and failing. The Council's intervention will enable the Council to obtain greater control of the town centre and ensure that future developments on this site have a positive impact in terms of placemaking and broader regeneration within the area. Current proposals for the site include the demolition of Milton Pavements and this will be informed by the outcome of the consultation on the regeneration plans.
- 1.2 The Council are freehold owners of a number of assets in close proximity to the Milton Pavement asset (Appendix 3). It is therefore appropriate to consider the potential marriage value of assets in this context – i.e. the ability to leverage greater value through critical mass and/or open up wider development opportunity and therefore value.
- 1.3 Of specific note in this regard is the Market Hall building, located immediately adjacent to the Milton Pavement asset. With Milton Pavement in situ the development and investment potential at the Market Hall is more limited – fronted by retail service yards. This presents a development constraint and would impact on future use and value generation within the Market Building.
- 1.4 However, the prospective acquisition of this asset has a much wider context than its relationship with the Market Hall asset. The site, both in isolation, and alongside other assets owned by the Council including surface level car parking and key assets on Europa Boulevard, could make a substantial contribution to the wider regeneration of Birkenhead town centre.
- 1.5 The regeneration of the town centre is a long-standing priority for the Council and was a key part the original backdrop to the formation of the Wirral Growth Company. In this context the Council are currently in the process of preparing a full business case relating to taking the head lease on a new commercial district within the town centre - to include potential for civic accommodation to drive footfall within the core of the centre in the short term, and deliver wider regenerative benefits, and are further considering the creation of a refreshed market offer within the town centre - with a food and drink focus.

Birkenhead Market

- 1.6 On the 18th December 2018 full Council approved the acquisition of the residue of the long leasehold interest in Birkenhead Market to facilitate its assimilation into the Council's freehold title.
- 1.7 The opportunity to purchase the balance of the leasehold interest in an asset in such a strategically important location will help to drive the redevelopment plans for Birkenhead which will be delivered by the Growth Company. These plans include a redesign of the town centre to include a range of quality food, retail and leisure offer

along with the direct opportunity to develop a refocused market dedicated to fresh produce and local goods to sit alongside a new commercial district that establishes this part of Birkenhead as the prime business district for the borough.

- 1.8 The site (as set out in Appendix 4) is currently not included in the Wirral Growth Company's Option Agreement and so we are seeking agreement to transfer.

Allport Lane

- 1.9 On the 18th August 2019 full Council, with reference to the Wirral Growth Company Options Agreement, resolved to accept a petition that Allport Lane Car Park be removed from the Local Plan as a development site because of the strength of opposition to any proposals to redevelop the site e.g. for housing.

- 1.10 The site is set out in the plan at Appendix 5 to this report.

- 1.11 It was agreed at the Wirral Growth Company LLP JV Board meeting that, in line with the motion agreed by full Council, this site would be removed from the LLP Option Agreement.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The options of 'Do Nothing' and the acquisition by the Wirral Growth Company of Milton Pavements and unit 13-15 St Werburgh's Square are considered within the Full Business Case which is attached to this report as Exempt Appendix 1.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council has set out a compelling case for economic growth across Wirral through its Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). The SRF was approved by Council in 2017 and has an initial focus on Birkenhead Town Centre, Birkenhead Hinterland, Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone (EZ) and the A41 corridor.

- 3.2 The ambition outlined in the SRF is that 'Birkenhead town centre will once again be a thriving town centre of choice, a destination in its own right as a result of the range and quality of its retail, food and leisure offer, and our civic hub'. The delivery of this ambition is a key priority underpinning the formation of the LLP.

- 3.3 Milton Pavements and the unit 13-15 within St. Werburgh's Square are owned by Mars Pension Trustees Limited and managed on their behalf by AEW UK & LLP. There are currently a number of vacant units within Milton Pavements and there is an opportunity to obtain greater control of the town centre through acquisition by the Council of the Milton Pavements site, thereby ensuring that future developments on this site have a positive impact in terms of placemaking and broader regeneration within the area. Given the well reported decline of the high street nationally and a challenging retail market, the acquisition of this asset will enable the Council, as long-term stakeholder and investor in the town, to directly influence change and ensure that wider regeneration aspirations can be delivered.

- 3.4 Draft Heads of Terms have been agreed in principle to acquire the freehold interest with vacant possession in the buildings shown hatched red on the attached plan (Appendix 3). Ownership of the 13-15 St. Werburgh's Square single unit will ensure

that a new service road out of the new development can be gained to any part of the new development on the Milton Pavement site.

- 3.5 The Council wishes to purchase with vacant possession and an independent valuation of the site for redevelopment is being undertaken to provide a fair value assessment to support the purchase price.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In February 2018 Cabinet agreed a budget for the Capital Programme and Financing for 2018 - 2021. Within the programme there is £20million allocated to deliver the Strategic Acquisition Programme. This Strategic Acquisition programme supports the achievement of the key economic goals as set out in the Wirral Growth Plan and the Strategic Regeneration Framework. In addition, £10million had been included with the 2017/18 programme for capital expenditure to allow for strategic land and site acquisition. This report seeks approval to acquire the Milton Pavements site in line with the Strategic Acquisition programme.

- 4.2 Costs related to items such as acquisition, demolition, insurances, security, loss of business rate income, SDLT have been included in the Full Business Case.

- 4.3 Further specific financial details of the scheme are set out in the Full Business Case attached as Exempt Appendix 1.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has the power to buy land to support regeneration.
- 5.2 Further legal due diligence and input will be required to inform the purchase of the sites including title investigation and conveyancing.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Internal officers to coordinate and manage all project related activities, undertake title investigation, conveyancing, financial modelling and monitoring, supplemented by an external surveying resource where necessary. These costs will be met from existing budgets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The immediate risks associated with the purchase of the two plots of land at Milton Pavement and the single unit 13-15 St. Werburgh's Square include the demolition contract risk and the cost risk under that contract. In managing the demolition process, an appropriate cost and programme contingency will be allowed.

- 7.2 Further ongoing risks are the market for redevelopment and the potential holding costs prior to that redevelopment. The Council would look to mitigate its holding costs either by reference to the Valuation Office Agency for business rates or via generating meanwhile income from events or temporary car parking.

- 7.3 Further risks are set out in the table below:

Risk	Mitigating Action	Impact
Freeholder withdraws from sale	AEW on behalf of Mars Pension Fund has stated that it wants to work collaboratively with the Council on the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre. As a last resort option the Council may also be able to exercise powers of CPO.	Low
Unexpected events or unknown conditions adversely impact costs and potential viability of any site or phase.	This will be managed through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme governance arrangements, e.g., reporting and control mechanisms, ongoing risk and issue management, etc. • Sensitivity analysis on the financial calculations. • Ensuring that surveys are accurate. • Contingency costing is undertaken as part of Site Development Plans (SDP's). 	Low
Planning consent is not forthcoming for demolition	The proposed demolition is entirely consistent with planning policy.	Low
Site surveys identify abnormal costs of development	The demolition and clearance is likely to be to ground level only. The demolition contract itself will include a contingency.	Low

8. ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 To be successful in our regeneration and economic growth ambitions we must generate awareness, interest and support from residents, businesses and other key stakeholders. Our strategy is informed by in-depth public consultation, outreach and engagement into the needs of Birkenhead with residents, workers, businesses and visitors. The first stage of consultation was to gather insight from those stakeholders as to their views and aspirations for Birkenhead. These findings have now underpinned, and been reflected in, the development of draft proposals for the town centre which will form the basis of the second stage of consultation. This second stage consultation will begin in the first week of November 2019.
- 8.2 The recommendation relating to Allport Lane Car Park responds to the representations made by the local community which were debated and supported at Full Council on the 18th August 2019.
- 8.3 In addition, further consultation will take place as part of the planning process.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The potential impact has been reviewed with regard to equality and links to the existing EIA conducted for Wirral's Growth Plan.
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2014-0>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Through the Wirral Growth Company the Council will be an advocate of promoting energy efficient buildings and of ensuring that any new developments minimise their impact on climate change.
- 10.2 The Council is putting in place a range of measures to accelerate progress to adopting a zero-carbon environment and the recommendations in this report will be taken forward to reflect these measures.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Acquisition Full Business Case (Exempt by virtue of Para 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

Appendix 2 – Acquisition Heads of Terms (Exempt by virtue of Para 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

Appendix 3 – Redline boundary for ‘Milton Pavements’

Appendix 4 – Redline boundary for ‘Birkenhead Market’

Appendix 5 – Redline boundary for ‘Allport Lane Car Park, Bromborough’

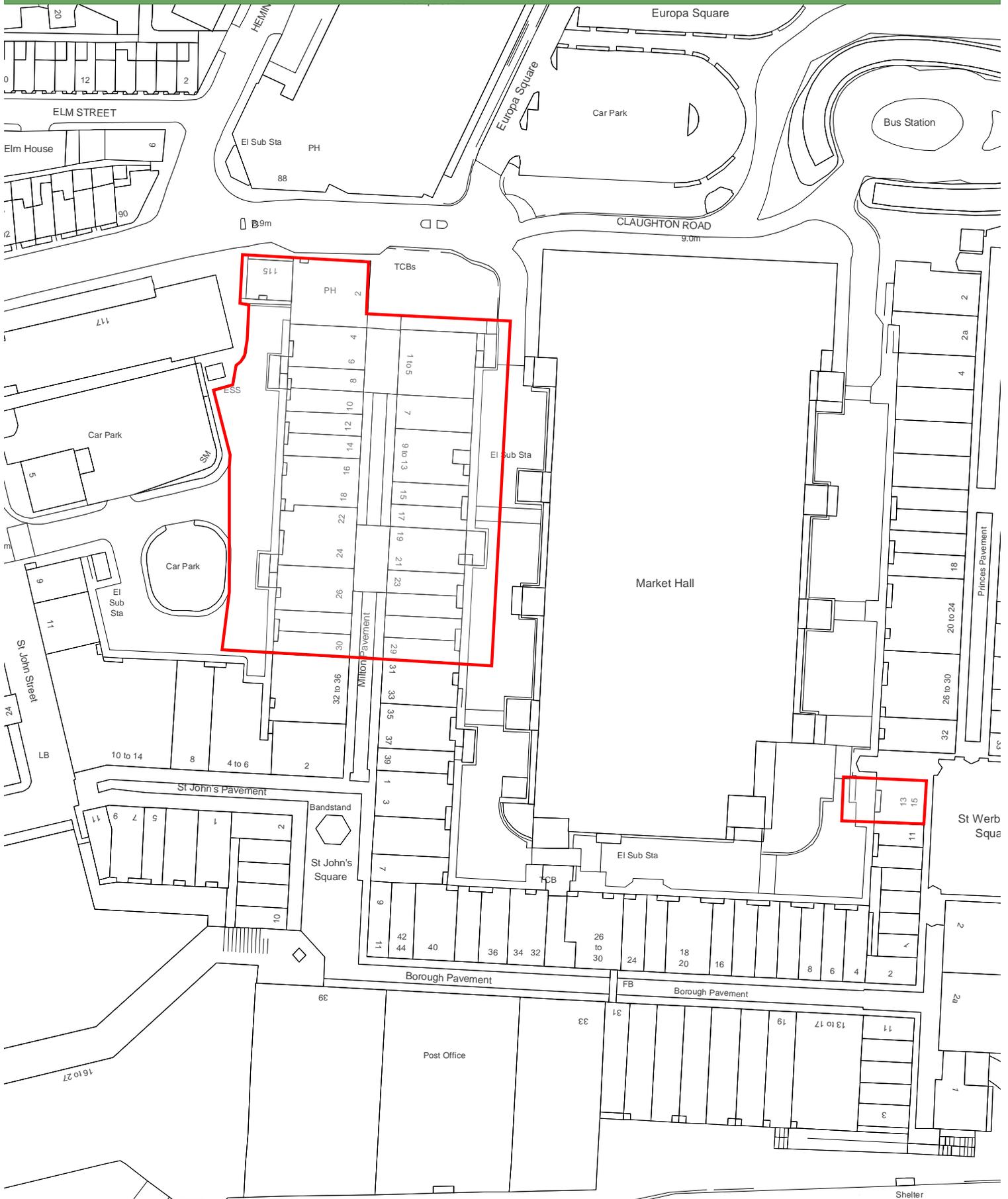
BACKGROUND PAPERS

Full Business Case
Heads of Terms

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Full Council (in relation to Birkenhead Market)	18 th December 2018
Cabinet	28 th February 2018
Full Council (in relation to Allport Lane)	18 th August 2019

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Production Date: 09 Aug 2019

Scale 1250

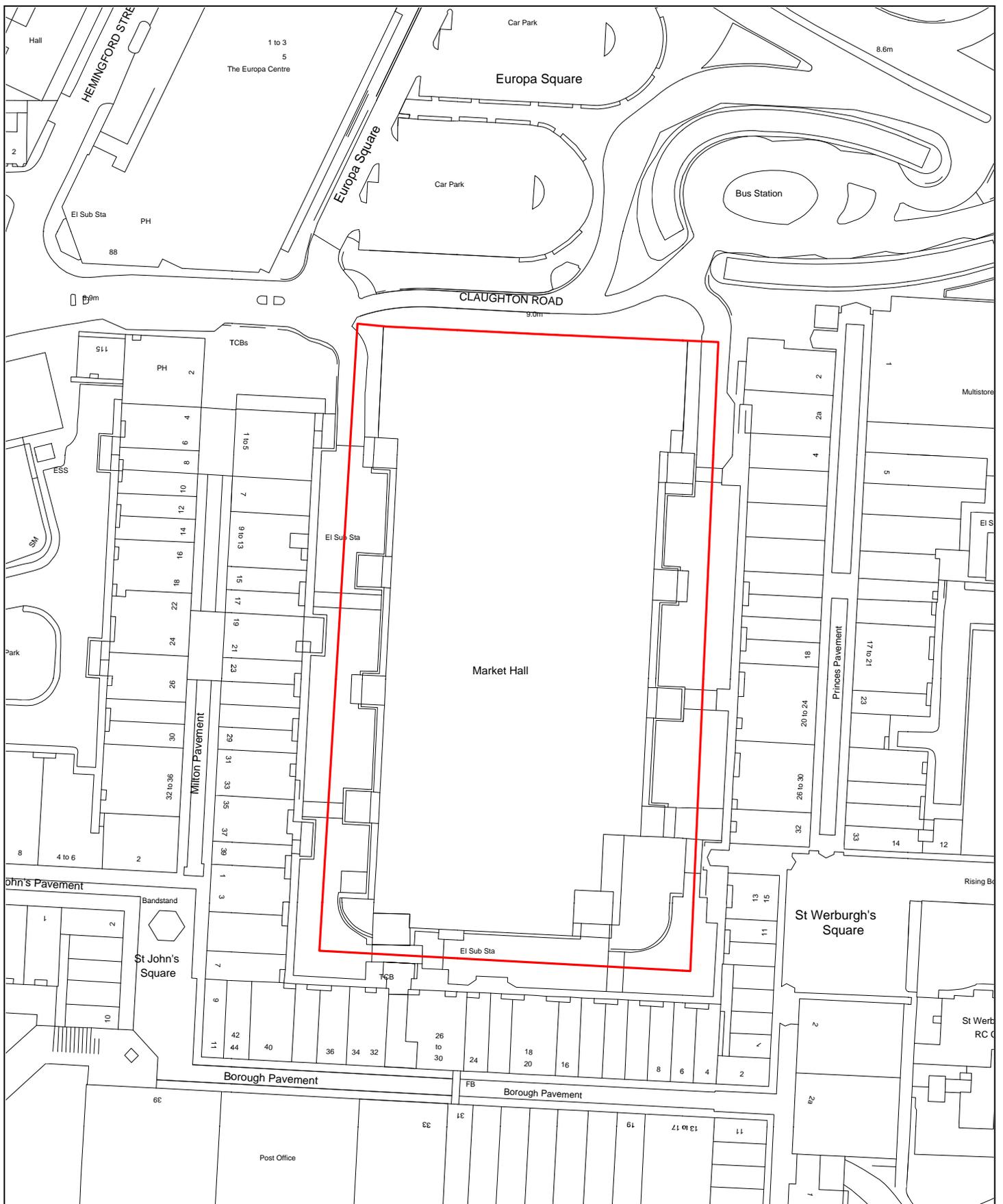
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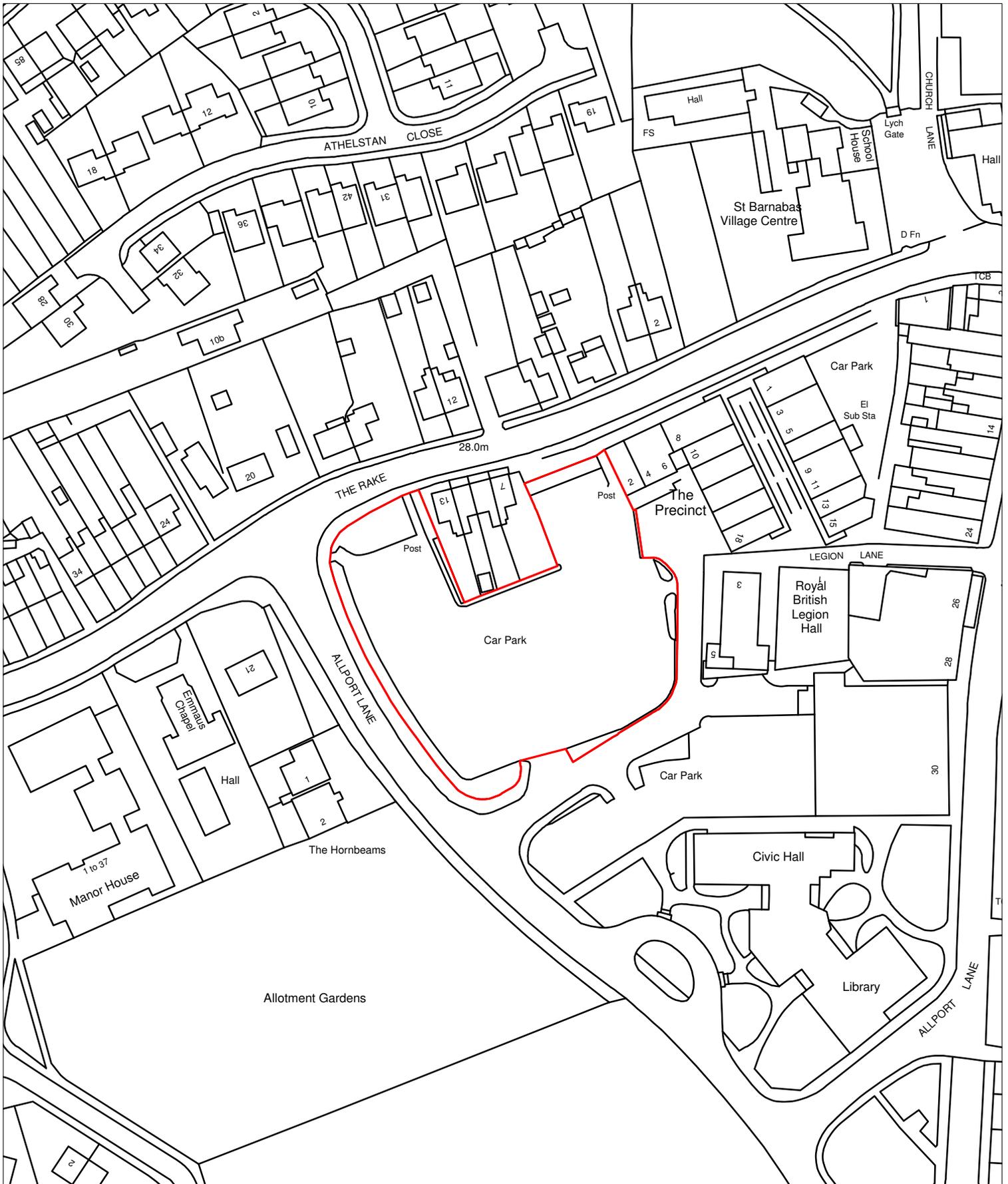


Birkenhead Market
 Cloughton Road
 Birkenhead
 Wirral
 CH41 2YH

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10 May 2018

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title Allport Lane Car Park The Rake Bromborough	scale 1:1250		
	date 30/5/2017	map ref. 142SE	

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CABINET

4 NOVEMBER 2019

COUNCIL TAX (EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM)

Councillor Janette Williamson (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) said:

“The driver behind this proposal is not increased revenue through council tax, it is about bringing pressure to bear on owners of empty properties to bring them back into use and provide homes for people who need them. Our figures indicate there are hundreds of properties which could be in use but are being left vacant. Wirral is currently under pressure to build at least 800 new homes a year and the owners of these empty properties should be playing their part by bringing their property back into use for rent. Ideally, no one would be paying this extra council tax – people can avoid it by letting these properties and providing homes for people in Wirral.”

REPORT SUMMARY

The report outlines the current arrangements for the charging of Council Tax on Empty Homes in Wirral together with new powers to increase this charge under the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

The report seeks approval to allow a 200% premium to be levied on from the 1st April 2020 on homes that have been empty for 5 years or more. This would make the Council Tax payable on such properties 300%.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Cabinet recommends to Council that the full premium of 200% be applied to homes that have been empty for 5 years or more as allowed by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 from the 1st April 2020.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 By adopting the Empty Homes Premium, an authority can encourage the use of empty properties to address the issue of the availability of homes within its area, whilst at the same time protecting vital services in the borough with the revenue raised.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not to charge the additional premium. Not recommended as it would not assist the aim of trying to bring empty properties back into use nor would it not raise additional income which could be used to protect vital services.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Billing authorities in England have discretion over the levels of Council Tax discount available on unoccupied properties. They may require full Council Tax payment from the owners of empty second homes, properties undergoing major repair, or properties that are 'unoccupied and substantially unfurnished'.
- 3.2 Billing authorities may also set an 'Empty Homes Premium' for properties that have been 'unoccupied and substantially unfurnished' for a specified period. The premium applies depending on how long the property has been empty, irrespective of the owner. It is for the billing authority to decide whether to levy an Empty Homes Premium.
- 3.3 In 2103 billing authorities were allowed to charge a 50% premium in properties which had been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over two year. This was increased to 100% from April 2019.
- 3.4 The existing position at Wirral is, like many local authorities, Wirral took the decision in 2013 to charge an Empty Homes Premium of 50% on properties that had been empty for 2 years or more. In 2019 this was increased to 100%. This meant owners of such properties were liable to 200% of the Council Tax.
- 3.5 Table 1 details the number of properties liable to Council Tax in each band together with the standard 100% charge for 2019/20. This is the charge before any premium or discounts.

Table 1

BAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
No	59,826	32,375	27,413	13,375	8,191	4,284	3,123	266
CTAX £	1,215.49	1,418.07	1,620.65	1,823.23	2,228.38	2,633.54	3,038.72	3,646.46

- 3.6 Table 2 details the 647 properties that have been empty over 2 years by band and which presently attract the 100% premium (200% Council Tax).

Table 2

BAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Empty over 2 years	476	79	39	23	7	12	9	2

- 3.7 From April 2020 local authorities have the option to increase the Empty Homes Premium for properties that have been empty for 5 years or more to 200% (making the Council Tax payable on such properties 300%.)
- 3.8 Presently of the 647 properties that have been empty for over 2 years listed in Table 2, and which attract the existing premium of 100%, 250 have been empty for over 5 years and would attract the increased premium if this was adopted.
- 3.9 Table 3 highlights the increase in Council Tax charges if the Council took the decision to utilise its powers to increase the premium for such properties from 100% to 200%. The table details the Bands into which these properties fall with their base charge, together with details of their existing 200% charge and the proposed 300% charge.

Table 3

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Empty over 5 years	175	38	20	7	4	2	4	0
Base charge	1,215.49	1,418.07	1,620.65	1,823.23	2,228.38	2,633.54	3,038.72	3,646.46
Current 200% charge	2,430.98	2,836.14	3,241.30	3,646.46	4,456.76	5,267.08	6,077.44	7,292.92
Proposed 300% charge	3,646.47	4,254.21	4,861.95	5,469.69	6,685.14	7,900.62	9,116.16	10,939.38

- 3.10 Table 4 details the additional Council Tax that would be billed by Band

Table 4

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	212,710	53,886	32,413	12,762	8,913	5,267	12,154	0

- 3.11 The total additional Council Tax billed would be £338,000.
- 3.12 Last year the in year collection rate for properties with the EHP was 77.80% compared with the overall collection rate of 94.80%. This could fall further with the premium being 3 times the normal council tax. However, all recovery options are used to collect this debt, whilst accommodating those who are in genuine financial hardship.
- 3.13 A collection rate of 60% would, however, generate an additional £200,000 per annum.

3.14 The total arrears since 2011 relating to the Empty Homes Premium amounts to £296,000. Recovery action is being taken against all of these accounts. Of the 250 properties that have been empty for over 5 years, 66 are presently in arrears of which 16 have Charging Orders on them. Charging Orders are only taken out on a property either at the owner's request or where all other avenues of recovery have been exhausted.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Charging the premium would raise an additional £200,000 in Council Tax based on the latest collection assumptions.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The premium would be in accordance with the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 Although affecting a small number of properties the queries generated by the existing premium currently takes up a disproportionate staff resource. It would be anticipated that increasing the premium still further will increase this type of query and hence use up resources in dealing with queries and complaints regarding the Empty Homes Premium.

6.2 Appendix 1 details exemptions to the Empty Homes Premium.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The increase to 300% of the Council Tax payable will place pressures on the collection of Council Tax, with possible increased use of Enforcement Agents.

7.2 The number of complaints already received for the existing premium is excessive compared to the number of properties effected. It is likely that the complaints will increase and be a draw on resources within the Revenues and Benefits teams. To mitigate this, advanced publicity will take place.

7.3 There is a risk associated with non collection of the premium, but this has been factored into the expected in year revenue. All recovery options are used to collect this debt, whilst accommodating those who are in genuine financial hardship.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 There is no requirement to consult on the changes to the Empty Homes Premium. Colleagues in the Housing Renewal Team have been consulted. They are supportive of the measure viewing it as a positive measure in attempting to bring empty homes back into occupation.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No because there is no relevance to equality.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The increased premium should assist in bringing empty properties back into use. This will assist the Council's response to climate and environmental implications by the reuse of resources.
- 10.2 It will have no measurable impact on emissions of CO2.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Exemptions to the Empty Homes Premium

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
COUNCIL TAX 2019/20 (TAXBASE, DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME)	26 th November 2018

Appendix 1

Exemptions to the Empty Homes Premium

The following exemptions shall apply to properties that would normally be subject to the Empty Homes Premium:

1. Homes that are empty due to the occupant living in armed forces accommodation for job-related purposes.
2. Annexes being used as part of a main property.
3. Individual properties, on an adhoc basis, as agreed by the Cabinet Member Finance and Resources in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer on advice from the Head of Customer Services and the Senior Manager Income Strategy & Policy.



CABINET
4 NOVEMBER 2019
COUNCIL TAX REDUCTIONS SCHEME

Councillor Janette Williamson (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) said:

“In 2013, the Conservative-led Coalition Government abolished Council Tax Benefit for hundreds of thousands of low-income households across the county. They replaced this support with the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, cutting the funding by 10% at the same time.

“This decision disadvantaged thousands of vulnerable, low-income Wirral families. Since its implementation, Wirral has tried its best to retain protection for these households, giving them the support that has been sadly lacking in national policy.

“I am delighted we have now developed a proposal to help us go further. This report provides a proposal for a new scheme of Council Tax reduction, an investment of more than £800,000 which will see more than 9,000 low income households get a better deal on their Council Tax.

“The proposals in this policy increase the level of support currently provided to thousands of the most financially vulnerable in Wirral by reducing their Council Tax liability, and to simplify the system for many residents including those on Universal Credit, zero hours contracts and irregular and incomes.

“We have always promised to put the most vulnerable first. This proposal is that promise in action.”

REPORT SUMMARY

The report outlines proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme operated by Wirral Council. The proposal has previously been before Members and approved in principle.

This report seeks approval to allow a reduction in the minimum amount payable by non protected groups from the current 22% minimum to a 12% minimum.

The report also seeks approval to simplify the claim process to enable notifications received from the Department of Work and Pension for applicants applying for Universal Credit to be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction.

Finally, the report seeks approval that minor amendments to the scheme for administrative purposes can be agreed by the Cabinet Member Finance and Resources in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer on advice from the Head of Customer Services and the Senior Manager Income Strategy & Policy.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- (1) Cabinet recommends to Council an amendment to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Wirral to reduce the minimum amount payable for non protected groups from the current 22% to 12%.

- (2) Cabinet recommends to Council an amendment to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Wirral to allow notifications in relation to Universal Credit to be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 By adopting these two amendments the authority will be relieving the pressure of Council Tax payments on some of the most vulnerable households in the borough and simplifying the way the reduction can be claimed.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No change to the existing Council Tax Scheme. This is not recommended as it would not increase the relief offered to low income households in the Borough.
- 2.2 Offer 100% Council Tax Reduction to all existing claimants. This is not recommended as the cost would be prohibitive.
- 2.3 Not to change the method of claiming Council Tax Reduction. Not recommended as this would not assist people claiming their entitlement.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As part of the government's welfare reform programme, Council Tax Benefit was abolished in 2013 and replaced by a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Nationally the funding for the scheme was 10% less than previously paid out under the former Council Tax Benefit Scheme.
- 3.2 The reduction in funding meant that many Councils offset the shortfall in funding by reducing the amount of support granted to householders. In addition, central government prescribed that non working age claimants were automatically protected from the abolition of Council Tax Benefit. This meant that the cut in funding was even greater than the 10% for non protected groups.
- 3.3 Following consultation Wirral Council decided, in addition to the protection offered to pensioners, to also protect other groups of householders in receipt of certain disability benefits.
- 3.4 For all other working age claimants in non protected groups Council Tax Reduction was reduced to the extent that such householders had to pay a minimum of 22% towards their Council Tax bill each year.
- 3.5 The Council awards Council Tax Reduction of £28m to approximately 32,000 householders. Any change to this support has the potential to be far reaching on some of the poorest households in the borough. By approving this change to the scheme, the Council would be offering further assistance to those households who have the greatest difficulty in paying. After considering different options it was determined that this was the most efficient and cost effective way of helping people. It has been fully costed and comes within budget whilst ensuring that nobody can lose out by the proposed change.
- 3.6 Councils are required to consider each year whether they want to amend their existing scheme or replace it with a new scheme. The proposal is to keep the scheme in its

existing format subject to these two amendments which will help some of the poorest households in the borough.

- 3.7 Since the scheme has been in operation many households are failing to clear their in year debt. There are maximum amounts of deductions allowed under both an attachment to benefits or wages and these are not normally sufficient to clear a person's outstanding debt within the financial year, leading to households having multiyear Council Tax debts outstanding.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Reducing the minimum amount payable to 12% would result in an additional £800,00 of Council Tax Reduction being awarded.
- 4.2 A permanent pressure of £1m has been included in advance within the 2019-2023 MTFS to fund the revised scheme. If Cabinet did not choose to approve the revised scheme, this would release a £1m pressure on the MTFS from 2020 onwards.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 13A (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council as the billing authority to make a localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with Section 1A of the Act.
- 5.2 Each financial year the Council must consider whether it wants to revise the scheme or replace it.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Both amendments, if approved, can be accommodated by the existing IT systems. There would be no resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Council Tax Reduction entitlement is dynamic and residents come on and off of entitlement on a daily basis. Although the Council Tax Reduction caseload has been relatively static there is always the risk that this could increase which would increase the amount of reduction people are entitled to. This would happen whether or not the scheme was changed.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 A consultation has taken place but the numbers who took part in the consultation were not sufficient for any meaningful data to be reported. However, there were no adverse comments.
- 8.2 This consultation met the following guiding principles for a fair consultation.

- It was at a time when proposals are at a formative stage.

- It included sufficient reasons for proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response.
- Those consulted were be made aware of the factors that were of decisive relevance to the decision.
- Adequate time was given for consideration and response.
- The product of the consultation has been conscientiously taken into account by the decision makers when the ultimate decision is taken.

8.2 The Director of Finance and Investment has written to the Preceptors informing them of the proposed changes both to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the Empty Homes Premium. No feedback has been received.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.2 There will be no measurable impact on emissions of CO2

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BACKGROUND PAPAERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	18 December 2017
Cabinet	26 November 2018
Cabinet	18 February 2019

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CABINET

4 NOVEMBER 2019

A Modern Slavery Strategy for Wirral

Councillor Tom Usher, Member for Children Families and Education stated:

“Wirral recognises that slavery is not a thing of the past but continues in the modern era, often with devastating effects upon its victims”

and endorsed the Pledge made at the 2019 Modern Slavery conference:

“Wirral will not tolerate Modern Slavery in any of its guises. We pledge to work together with our communities to protect our most vulnerable and ensure criminals are held to account using all of the powers at our disposal.”

REPORT SUMMARY

Wirral Council has set out a Strategy, Action plan, and Code of Conduct addressing Modern Slavery to ensure a coordinated approach together with partners and communities, to prevent criminals being able to prey on the most vulnerable within our communities.

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act councils have a duty to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their areas, which includes modern slavery and trafficking.

As part of Pledge 19; ‘Wirral’s Neighbourhoods are Safe,’ the Safer Wirral Partnership Board is already committed to protecting the most vulnerable victims of crime. The Wirral Modern Slavery Officers Group will meet regularly to monitor progress of Wirral’s Modern Slavery Action Plan and report to the Safer Wirral Partnership Board which will be responsible for the governance of Wirral’s Modern Slavery Strategy.

Wirral’s Modern Slavery Strategy has received scrutiny from the Elected Members Working Group in October 2018, where it also considered the recommendations of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee of November 2016:

The Elected Members Working Group took into account the concern that Modern Slavery has become across Wirral and endorsed both the priorities laid out within Strategy and the recommendations from the Committee be incorporated into a Modern Slavery Action Plan for Wirral. This is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Cabinet is recommended to adopt:

The Wirral Modern Slavery Strategy
The Wirral Modern Slavery Action Plan
Wirral Council annually updated Modern Slavery / Human Trafficking Statement

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 In 2018 the Council signed up to the Co-operative Party's Charter Against Modern Slavery to ensure our procurement practices do not support slavery, to consider the wider impact of modern slavery on the borough and to ensure that all forms of modern slavery are eliminated in A strategic approach to tackling Modern Slavery in Wirral is a required to coordinate activity preventing criminals and supporting victims and to agree and oversee the successful implementation of Wirral's Modern Slavery Action Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Wirral Council has agreed that it will not tolerate Modern Slavery in any of its guises.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Modern slavery, (or Modern Day Slavery), is an umbrella term, encompassing human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour. Modern slavery is a serious crime and the fastest growing organised crime in the world. In 2017 UK referrals to the National Referral Mechanism increased by 35% on the previous year, from 3,805 to 5,145, whilst in Merseyside the increase was from 38 to 89, an increase of 134%. It is hidden in plain sight and within our communities, high streets and businesses. In 2016 it was estimated 45.8 million men, women and children from every part of the globe were victims of modern slavery.

- 3.2 There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery, however only one needs to be present for slavery to exist and victims can often face more than one type of exploitation. A person is considered to be in slavery if they are:

- Forced to work through mental or physical threat
- Owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse
- Dehumanised - treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'
- Physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom.

- 3.3 The Modern Slavery Act 2015, gained royal Assent on 26 March 2015. The Modern Slavery Act's stated purpose was to "tackle the worst exploitation" and consolidate various offences relating to human trafficking and slavery.

The Act established the role of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner with a UK-wide remit to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of modern slavery offences and the identification of victims.

- 3.4 In July 2016 Wirral's People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the 'Implications of Modern Slavery Act 2015 for Local Authorities'. This made a number of recommendations:

1. staff training and awareness raising
2. clear reporting methods
3. senior management to identify potential and manage risk of modern slavery

- 3.5 Following these recommendations, a series of multi-agency training courses have been delivered by both Merseyside Police officers specialising in modern slavery operations and staff receiving specific Modern Slavery training, under an initiative commissioned across the North West by Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS). Over 120 people have received training including statutory agencies, practitioners and community groups.
- 3.6 This training has provided a clearer understanding of the legislation the issues in identifying and reporting Modern Slavery, and the initiatives and interventions that can address modern slavery across Wirral via statutory partners agencies and practitioners as well as the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- 3.7 Awareness raising initiatives on Wirral have included:
- Wirral's Modern Slavery Conference
 - Modern Slavery Workshop
 - Wirral's Adherence to Cooperative Party's Charter against Modern Slavery
 - The Invisible People exhibition
 - Multi Agency Training Delivered by Police and Safeguarding Staff

These initiatives have ensured all relevant agencies have been given the opportunity to understand and address the risks posed by modern slavery and ensure there is a coordinated response including clear reporting methods.

- 3.8 Wirral Council's Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee met in March 2017. The committee convened a Task and Finish Group to understand the implications of the Act. It published a draft Scoping Document 'Modern Slavery' with the objective to review:
- the implications of the Act
 - best practise for the Council and its partners
 - arrangements with regard to prevention, detection, and support for victims
- 3.9 The Local Government Association published 'Modern Slavery, A Council Guide' In December 2017, endorsed by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. The guidance set out in detail the processes required to implement the duties under the Act.
- 3.10 Wirral established an Officers Task and Finish Group which recommended a 'Modern Slavery Plan for Wirral,' be developed, based on the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the LGA guidance.

Charter against Modern Slavery

- 3.11 Marking National Anti Slavery Day on 18/10/18 Cabinet Member for Law and Order, Cllr. Paul Stuart on behalf of the Council signed up to the Co-Operative Party's [charter against Modern Slavery](#). This was done in coordination with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, Cllr. Emily Spurrell and the five Local Authorities of Merseyside, showing the region's strong commitment to end modern slavery.

- 3.12 The charter commits councils to examine their supply chains, beyond current legislative requirements, to ensure that their procurement activities are not aiding or creating instances of modern slavery. In total English Local Authorities spend £40 Billion annually procuring products and services for their communities. It is therefore right that they play their part as responsible buyers.

At the time Cllr. Stuart said:

“I welcome the opportunity to sign up to the Charter against Modern Slavery, and do so with pride. Modern Slavery might not always be obvious, but its exploitation of vulnerable people can be happening all around us. I am working with Wirral Council and its partners to ensure modern slavery has no place in Wirral. We will do our best to protect victims and push for the prosecution of those who commit this crime.”

- 3.13 Following on from this the council has worked internally with commissioning/procurement officers, not only seeking to audit the council’s supply chain in line with the charter but to integrate these services into wider community safety work e.g. PREVENT.

3.14 **Wirral Modern Slavery Strategy & Conference**

On 21 January 2019 the council held a Modern Slavery Conference at the Floral Pavilion Theatre, New Brighton. This event acted as the launch for Wirral’s Modern Slavery strategy. An audience from across stakeholder agencies attended including those dealing with vulnerable individuals and communities in safeguarding and enforcement roles. As well as partners working in strategic roles.

- 3.15 The strategy was developed around the 4Ps, (Pursue, Prevent, Protect Prepare), following the Government’s Modern Slavery Strategy and the Merseyside Modern Slavery Network.

- Pursue, perpetrators will be deterred, disrupted and prosecuted
- Prevent, raise awareness and improve opportunities to identify victims
- Protect, vulnerable people from exploitation
- Prepare, coordinate partners to prevent and report modern slavery

- 3.16 The conference itself was also delivered around these principles with speakers providing, national, regional and local perspectives on tackling modern slavery. Speakers included representatives from the following partners:

- Wirral Council, Environmental Health
- Merseyside Police, Operation Sanctuary/Wirral Single Point of Contact
- Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority
- Home Office
- Salvation Army (who hold the Government’s contract for specialist support to adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales, along with local providers)

3.17 **Modern Slavery Strategy Workshop**

A workshop session held at the conference discussed how partner agencies can collaborate at a local level. This assisted the development of Wirral’s Modern Slavery Strategy and the actions and intentions of and Modern Slavery Action Plan. Partnership working and understanding the role of all partners and agencies, both at frontline and strategic levels is vital for effectively tackling the multifaceted issues of modern slavery.

3.18 The outcomes of the Modern Slavery Strategy workshop were developed into the Wirral Modern Slavery Action Plan with four main priorities.

1. Improve Awareness, Identification, and Understanding
2. Embed Modern Slavery into Mainstream Activity
3. Put Victims at the Heart of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
4. Hold Perpetrators to Account and Promote Appropriate Actions

3.19 **Invisible People Exhibition**

Between 17 January 2019 and 26 February 2019 Wirral hosted the *Invisible People* Exhibition at the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre in Liscard, Wallasey.

Invisible People is a touring photographic exhibition aiming to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. Created by the National Crime Agency (NCA) with award-winning photographer Rory Carnegie and human rights charity the Helen Bamber Foundation. The exhibition aims to recreate the lives of Invisible People, the victims of modern slavery and expose the reality of modern slavery in its many forms. Photos depict the working and living conditions of victims across key industries where modern slavery may occur.

Since its launch in January 2018 the exhibition has been to 15 different UK cities including landmark venues such as Westminster Abbey and Canary Wharf. We are delighted that Wirral will bring *Invisible People* to Merseyside for the first time, to the heart of Wallasey, where three 2 metre backlight cubes (Figure 1) bring this hidden crime into sharp focus.

The NCA wished to inform and educate the public of the signs of what is usually a hidden and covert crime and develop a conversation around modern slavery. Through public communications around the Modern Slavery Strategy via press and social media and the *Invisible People* exhibition we have been able to start new conversations and promote understanding and awareness of the problem.

Wirral Globe 21/01/19



Figure 1:

The three cubes sited within the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre, Liscard exhibiting the text and images of *Invisible People* (NCA 2018)

3.20 **Modern Slavery Policy on Merseyside**

Wirral has senior representation within the two Merseyside Modern Slavery strategic fora, Merseyside Modern Slavery Network and 'Operation Sanctuary':

3.21 **Merseyside Modern Slavery Network** is a quarterly meeting chaired and coordinated by the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner. Priorities for this forum are:

- Community awareness-raising
- Intelligence sharing
- Survivor support
- Monitoring and analysis of progress

3.22 **Operation Sanctuary** is a Merseyside based, Police-Led, multi-agency forum meeting on a quarterly basis. It's remit is to coordinate operational activity across statutory partnership agencies with an emphasis on coordinating and combining the necessary tools and powers to deter, disrupt and prosecute perpetrators of Modern Slavery. Operation Sanctuary has a Police Officer embedded within each Authority.

3.23 Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act councils have a duty to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their areas, which includes modern slavery and trafficking.

3.24 Under Pledge 19 'Wirral's Neighbourhoods are Safe,' the Safer Wirral Partnership Board is already committed to protecting the most vulnerable victims of crime, many of whom already sit within the definition of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

4.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Wirral Borough Council is committed to better understand it's supply chains and to work towards a greater transparency and responsibility for people working in them, in accordance with our policy of observing the spirit of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Wirral updated the Supplier Code of Conduct in August 2019 to address Modern Slavery issues.

4.2 Whilst the implementation of section 52 of the Act will allow for greater transparency in slavery and human trafficking, there may be financial implications for the Council. This comes at a time when the Council remains under pressure to make further savings. As such, the estimated costs for facilitating reporting under section 52 will need to be calculated

5.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There would be a significant legal risk should the Council fail to comply with its duties under section 52 of the Act. Penalties for non-compliance are however limited though enforcement action may be taken by the Secretary of State.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There will be minimal staffing or ICT implications as the necessary notification forms and associated guidance have already been uploaded to the Council's website and will only require updating with changes in legislation and any new initiatives.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 In terms of reputational risk for failing to comply with the Act, it is anticipated that pressure groups may target businesses in vulnerable sectors. Businesses may find it difficult to successfully tender for work or attract investment.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Wirral's Modern Slavery Strategy has received scrutiny from the Elected Members Working Group in October 2018, where it also considered the recommendations of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee of November 2016:
The Elected Members Working Group took into account the concern that Modern Slavery has become across Wirral and endorsed both the priorities laid out within the Strategy and the recommendations from the Committee be incorporated into a Modern Slavery Action Plan for Wirral.
- 8.2 In October 2018 Wirral's draft Modern Slavery Strategy was shared with key agencies and officers, including Adult Care and Health, Children's Services, Public Health, Corporate Strategy, Early Help and Prevention, Community Safety, Housing Services and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services and Merseyside Police. Environmental Health, Licensing & Trading Standards were also engaged as a result of initial feedback from Members.
- 8.3 In January 2019 Wirral hosted a Modern Slavery Conference. Presentations were made by National and Regional Leads to an audience of practitioners representing a wide range of agencies, Elected Members and community representatives.
The conference included a workshop scrutinising and developing Wirral's Draft Modern Slavery Strategy.
- 8.4 Between 17 January 2019 and 26 February 2019 Wirral hosted the *Invisible People* Exhibition at the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre in Liscard, Wallasey. *Invisible People* is a touring photographic exhibition aiming to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. The exhibition aims to recreate the lives of 'Invisible People', the victims of modern slavery, and expose the reality of modern slavery in its many forms. Created by the National Crime Agency its purpose is to inform and educate the public of the signs of what is usually a hidden and covert crime and develop a conversation around modern slavery.
Through public communications via press and social media the *Invisible People* exhibition prompted a dialogue within Wirral communities and helped promote understanding and awareness of Modern Slavery issues.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Slavery can affect all people regardless of race, gender, disability or age. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and can be viewed:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2017-1>

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APPENDICES

- Wirral Modern Slavery Action Plan 2018.docx
- Wirral Modern Slavery Strategy 2018 21.pdf
- supplier-code-of-conduct 130819.docx
- Enc. 1 for Modern Slavery - Scrutiny Report.doc

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Wirral Modern Slavery Policy Development Chronology

July 2018

The Home Secretary commissioned an Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, (subsequently presented to Parliament in May 2019).

October 2018

Consultation With Key Agencies / Practitioners

Wirral's draft Modern Slavery Strategy was shared with key agencies and officers, including Adult Care and Health, Children's Services, Public Health, Corporate Strategy, Early Help and Prevention, Community Safety, Housing Services and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services and Merseyside Police. Environmental Health, Licensing & Trading Standards were also engaged as a result of initial feedback from Members.

October 2018

Wirral Council pledged commitment to the Cooperative Party's Modern Slavery Charter

The Co-operative Party's Charter Against Modern slavery goes further than existing law and guidance, committing councils to proactively vetting their own supply chain to ensure no instances of modern slavery are taking place.

October 2018

Modern Slavery Members Workshop

Cllrs. Chris Carubia, Christina Muspratt, and Tom Usher together with Officers Mark Camborne, Mike Lester, and Bob Little undertook process to scrutinise Wirral's Draft Modern Slavery Strategy.

November 2018

Environment - Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Review was undertaken recommending: "The work and contents of this report is considered before the draft Modern Slavery Strategy is referred to Cabinet for approval".

January 2019

Wirral Modern Slavery Conference

Presentations were made by National and Regional Leads to an audience of practitioners representing a wide range of agencies, Elected Members and community representatives. The conference included a workshop scrutinising and developing Wirral's Draft Modern Slavery Strategy. A Wirral Modern Slavery workshop outcomes document was circulated.

January & February 2019

Invisible People Exhibition For 6 weeks Wirral hosted the *Invisible People* photographic exhibition at the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre in Liscard, to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking.

February 2019

Serious Crime - North West Serious Violence workshop

This event is one of a number of regional events the Home Office undertook to allow Ministers to visit various regions in the UK and see how the Serious Violence Strategy is being implemented against the strategy's four key themes:

- tackling county lines and misuse of drugs
- early intervention and prevention
- supporting communities and partnerships
- effective law enforcement and criminal justice response

February - March - April 2019

Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) commissioned Training on Wirral to become approved Modern Slavery ‘Train the Trainer’ Trainers
Three separate multi agency sessions were delivered to practitioner agencies

March 2019

Operation Sanctuary Training
Specific Modern Slavery Training was delivered by key Police Officer Practitioners to a range of Front-line staff and key practitioner agencies

May 2019

Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State (subsequent reply from Government in July 2019)

July 2019

Government Response to Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

July 2019

Libre Solutions and Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner

Libre Solutions (Southport-based Modern Slavery Victim advocate charity) delivered a session to Merseyside and Cheshire Authorities, convened by the Office of the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, on the changes to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (Particularly Section 54 regarding procurement practises) and how it will affect public services.

August 2019

All Procurement staff trained through the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply’s (CIPS) online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply.
Draft Wirral Supplier Code of Conduct Completed.

Council Meeting	Date
Environment - Overview and Scrutiny Committee	November 18

Ref. No.	Action	Agency	Contact Details	Method	Target Date	Progress
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Perpetrators will be Deterred, Disrupted and Prosecuted

	Ensure enforcement and regulatory agencies are able to spot the signs of modern slavery and aware of each other's Tools and Powers to deter, disrupt and prosecute offenders	Police Modern Slavery Single Point of Contact and Community Police Inspectors	Police Officers: Tracy Grafton Georgina Minnery, and Paul Harrison	Formalise and foster existing relationships amongst lead enforcement agencies including: Police, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, ASB Team, HMRC, utility companies, UK Border Patrol, Planning Enforcement, Building Control, Home Office Immigration Enforcement		
Page 37	Ensure Partners Coordinate Enforcement Action	Merseyside Police-led Operation Sanctuary and Merseyside Modern Slavery Network (office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)	DCI John Webster Norma Kielty Crummey	Regional Coordination of activity through the Multi Agency 'Operation Sanctuary', and the Merseyside Modern Slavery Network		
	Ensure Modern Slavery operations are tenacious in the disruption of the activities of traffickers and criminal networks and the prosecution of offenders	Environmental Health and Trading Standards Police Modern Slavery SPOC	Colin Clayton Dan Dawson Jon Hardwick Jo Moran Tracy Grafton	Coordination and communication between those agencies with potential to supply intelligence or add to the available tools and powers. E.g. gaining access to premises to disrupt criminal activities		
	Monitor prosecution rates	Police Modern Slavery Unit Operation Sanctuary	Adam Hodgson 01517778523	Actively monitor prosecution rates including appropriate benchmarks from other similar areas, to highlight themes and trends and ensure that Wirral follows best practice in the disruption of offenders		

Ref. No.	Action	Agency	Contact Details	Method	Target Date	Progress
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Raise Awareness – Improve Opportunities To Identify Victims

	High profile Conference to Launch Strategy and agree multi agency action plan	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Mark Camborne	Modern Slavery Conference to gain best practice from regional and national leads as well as local practitioners to motivate and galvanise agencies to agree a Wirral multi agency action plan		
	Create Modern Slavery Coordinator's role	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Bob Little	Role of Modern Slavery Coordinator to institute an officer's group and develop, coordinate and be accountable for activity addressing Modern Slavery		
Page 38	High Profile Interactive Awareness Raising Initiative – 'Invisible People' is a touring photographic exhibition raising awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. Three 2 meter backlit cubes will bring this hidden crime into the open	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Bob Little	Stakeholder agencies and community volunteers undertake Modern Slavery training and staff the exhibition sited in Liscard Cherry Tree Shopping Centre over a 4 week period. They will be able to refer former and potential victims, and advise 'first responder' agencies and the general public.		
	Modern Slavery training for leaders and practitioners	Modern Slavery Officer's Group	Mark Camborne	Specific training to ensure all aspects and implications of Modern Slavery are understood		
	Ensure Council staff understand and are able to address their responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act	Human Resources	Maxine Watts Organisational Team Leader	Agree and implement Modern Slavery training policies to ensure staff understand their responsibilities as a 'first responder' agency		
	Ensure newly recruited Council employees have an awareness of modern slavery and their responsibilities under the Act	Human Resources	Maxine Watts Organisational Team Leader	Modern Slavery added to the Wirral Council induction process		
	Raise awareness and provide advice and guidance around Modern Slavery	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Laura Roberts Lucia Jordan	Development of a Council webpage to host a Modern Slavery Statement, raise awareness including a confidential helpline and provide advice and guidance around Modern Slavery		

Ref. No.	Action	Agency	Contact Details	Method	Target Date	Progress
	Transparency Statement - Publish on internet and refer to the Wirral Modern Slavery Public Policy (see below) *	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Bob Little	Wirral Transparency Statement published on the internet – It will be signed by the CEO and Council Leader with an undertaking to be update annually		
	* Meet the requirements of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act through a Wirral Modern Slavery Procurement Policy	Council Procurement	Keith Patterson Bob Little	Council to publish on the internet a statement of the steps it has taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, or in any part of its businesses		
	Train all Procurement staff understand modern slavery and thereby Council money cannot be used to support exploitation	Council Procurement	Nicola Butterworth Keith Patterson	All Procurement staff trained through the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply's (CIPS) online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply		
Page 39	Monitor Supply Chains for Modern Slavery. Wirral is one of over 50 Councils signed up to the Co-op's Modern Slavery charter: Cooperative Party Charter Against Modern Slavery\	Council Procurement	Nicola Butterworth Keith Patterson	Ensure the vetting of business and supply chains. The prevention, detection and reporting of modern slavery in any part of the Council's business or supply chains		
	Promote awareness of Modern Slavery	Campaign Management	Laura Roberts Campaign Manager	Ensure Council staff, practitioner agencies and the wider community are aware of modern slavery and know how to obtain guidance on referring to the National Referral Mechanism		
	Coordinate Merseyside Activity including Police, Councils and Voluntary Community and Faith Sector	Merseyside Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	Norma Kielty-Crummey	Merseyside Modern Slavery Network to identify and address the threat posed by Modern Slavery in Merseyside through the coordination of activities of local, regional, and national agencies		

Ref. No.	Action	Agency	Contact Details	Method	Target Date	Progress
Protect Vulnerable People From Exploitation						
	Promote links with specialist support Agencies and communities to ensure Modern Slavery Survivors are given the ongoing support they require	Wirral Safeguarding Children Board	Safeguarding Board representative	Prevent victims from becoming re - victimised by ensuring advocate agencies are aware of the potential for repeat - victimisation		
		Combined Safeguarding Adults Board		Ensure all risks have been reduced and links with the victim are maintained to ensure risks cannot re-occur		
Page 40	Promote the referral of victims to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Ensure there is a system in place and necessary guidance and documentation available on the Council Website to make referrals through to the NRM.	Wirral safeguarding Children Board Combined Safeguarding Adults Board	Safeguarding Board representative	Support all agencies in understanding Section 52 of the Act requiring identification and referral of modern slavery child victims and consenting adult victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery Council Link https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/modern-slavery-trafficking/		
	Early intervention and victim-focus within communities, partners and businesses. "Making every contact count" with potential victims	Wirral safeguarding Children Board Combined Safeguarding Adults Board	Safeguarding Board representative	Ensure communities, practitioners and agencies understand the victims' perspective and adult victims are given the understanding and confidence to consent to referral		
	Ensure victims are given the practical and emotional support through the criminal justice process	Agency acting as 'First Responder'	Chair - Modern Slavery Officers Group	Extra support and awareness for those supporting victims through the criminal justice system		

Ref. No.	Action	Agency	Contact Details	Method	Target Date	Progress
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Coordinate Partners to Prevent and Report Modern Slavery

	Formation of a strategic 'Wirral Modern Slavery Officers Group'	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Mark Camborne	Ensure governance of Modern Slavery Officer's Group including Terms of Reference within the Safer Wirral Partnership Board		
	Compare activity and performance of other anti-slavery partnerships in existence across the UK:	Modern Slavery Officers Group	Bob Little	Promote best practice locally through engagement with similar Modern Slavery Partnerships across LCR, Cheshire and UK: http://iascmap.nottingham.ac.uk		
Page 41	Ensure those bodies commissioned through the National Referral Mechanism e.g. Salvation Army, City Hearts, Medaille Trust have clear communication and coordination arrangements with victim service providers	Wirral Safeguarding Children Board Combined Safeguarding Adults Board	Safeguarding Board representative	Assessment of victim care pathway to ensure there are no blockages in the referral or post-NRM care services.		
	Promote awareness of the Strategic Modern Slavery Officers Group	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Bob Little	Promote through a range of internal and external marketing campaigns to ensure representation and participation of all appropriate agencies		
	Ensure Information sharing protocols are in place to cover all agencies collaborating	Safer Wirral Partnership Board	Bob Little	All working groups maintain a consistent approach to Data Sharing Agreements / Information Sharing Protocols in order to comply with current legislation when sharing information		
	Management to review their departments to identify any potential risk of slavery and human trafficking and take appropriate steps to manage that risk	Council	Mark Camborne	Ensure staff attend Modern Slavery training sessions and Modern Slavery is an agenda item in all team briefings and appropriate meetings		

Definitions

Slavery Someone is in 'slavery' if they are:

- forced to work through mental or physical threat
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse
- dehumanised ~ treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'
- physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom¹

Servitude ² is similar to slavery, in that a person is under an obligation to provide a service which is imposed on them, but there is no element of ownership

Forced work ³ is defined as 'work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily'⁶ and has been found in a number of different industries including manufacturing, food processing, agriculture and hospitality

Human trafficking is when men, women and children are moved and forced into exploitation. The movement could be international but also within the country, from one city to another or even just a few streets. A person is a victim of human trafficking even if they haven't yet been exploited but have been moved for the purposes of exploitation

There are a number of different types of exploitation that victims of modern slavery may be subjected to, and victims may experience more than one type of exploitation at the same time.

The most common forms of exploitation are:

Sexual exploitation: victims may be forced into prostitution, pornography or lap dancing for little or no pay. They may be deprived of their freedom of movement and subjected to threats and violence.

Labour exploitation: a victim is made to work with little or no pay, and may face violence or threats. If they are foreign nationals, their passports may be confiscated by their exploiters and they may be made to live in terrible conditions and under constant threat.

Forced criminality: victims can be forced to participate in a range of illegal activities including pick pocketing, shop lifting, cannabis cultivation, county lines exploitation* and other activities. The Modern Slavery Act provides for a defence for victims who have been forced into criminality.

Organ harvesting: victims are trafficked in order for their internal organs (typically kidneys or the liver) to be harvested for transplant.

Domestic servitude: victims work in a household where they may be ill-treated, humiliated, subjected to exhausting hours, forced to work and live under unbearable

* **County lines** ~ County Lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and towns using dedicated mobile phone lines – these are the county lines. It involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money

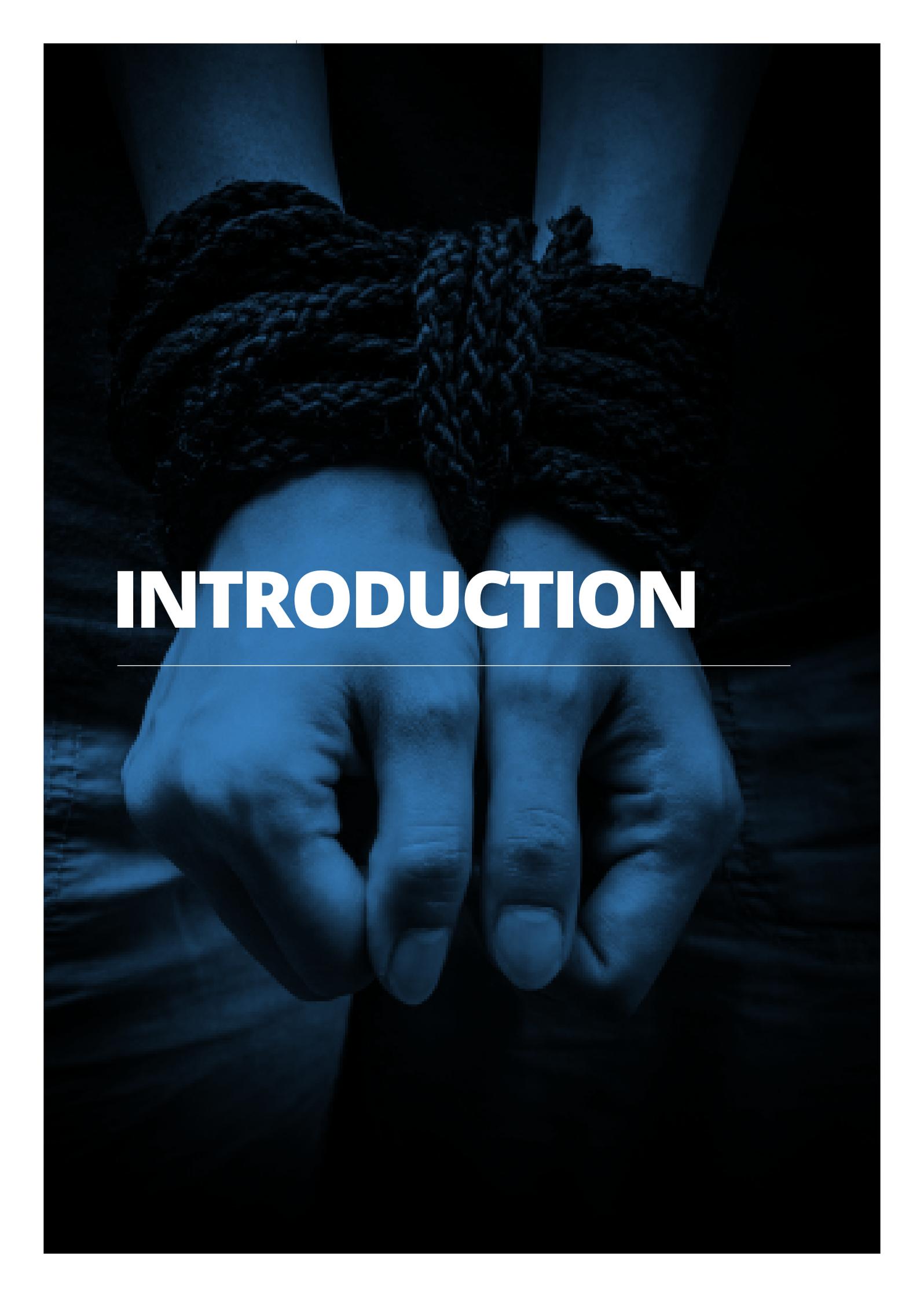
¹ www.unseenuk.org/about/the-problem/modern-slavery

² www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-4-freedom-slavery-and-forced-labour

³ www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/definition/lang--en/index.htm

WIRRAL MODERN SLAVERY STRATEGY

2018 - 2021



INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD

I am proud to present Wirral's Strategy for Modern Slavery on behalf of Wirral Council and the Wirral Partnership.

Wirral recognises that slavery is not a thing of the past but continues in the modern era, often with devastating effects upon its victims

Aligning with the Merseyside Police and Crime Plan 2017-2012 we will improve upon the good work that is already taking place across the Wirral to deliver on our Pledge:

'Wirral Neighbourhoods are Safe'

Wirral will not tolerate Modern Slavery in any of its guises under any circumstances.

The purpose of this document is to set out the strategic approach Wirral will adopt, working together as an effective partnership with communities, to protect our most vulnerable and ensure criminals are held to account using all the powers at our disposal.

We will ensure the successful implementation of the strategy through the oversight of the Safer Wirral Partnership Board.



*Councillor Paul Stuart
Wirral Cabinet Member - Law and Order
Chair of Safer Wirral Partnership Board*

INTRODUCTION

The word **'slavery'** is synonymous with one of the darkest chapters in human history, where for over 400 years, more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade where the enslaved person became considered the legal property of someone else, to be bought and sold.

MODERN SLAVERY

Modern slavery refers to slavery that continues to exist in present day society

Modern slavery is a serious crime. It encompasses slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. Modern slavery victims can often face more than one type of abuse and slavery, for example if they are sold to another trafficker and then forced into another form of exploitation.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A person is trafficked if they are brought to (or moved around) a country by others who threaten, frighten, hurt and force them to do work or other things they don't want to do.

In 2016 it was estimated 45.8 million men women and children from every part of the globe were victims of modern slavery.¹

Estimates of the number of modern slavery victims in the world today vary between 21 and 70 million.

Modern Slavery goes unnoticed or unreported because many victims are unable or reluctant to engage with authorities (or may not be recognised as victims of this kind of offending if they do) and may be moved frequently across geographical boundaries. While the plight of victims remains unseen and unresolved, offenders can and will continue to exploit them.

In 2014 the Home Office estimates there were between 10,000 and 13,000 potential victims of modern slavery in the UK.²

The true number is likely to be far higher. In the National Crime Agency press release, 10 August 2017, Director of Vulnerabilities, Will Kerr stated: "The growing body of evidence we are collecting points to the scale [of modern slavery in the UK] being far larger than anyone had previously thought."³

¹ 2016 Global Slavery Index 2016 Website

² Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Strategic Plan 2015-17

³ www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/1171-law-enforcement-steps-up-response-to-modern-slavery

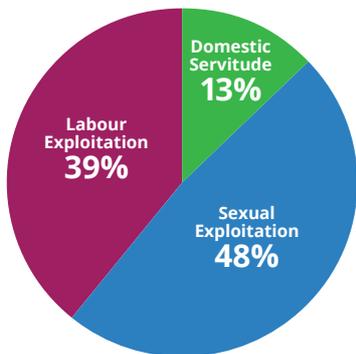
VICTIMS OF SLAVERY

Between 2011 and 2017 there was a 300% increase in the number of modern slavery victims in the UK, being supported as a consequence of a referral into the NRM

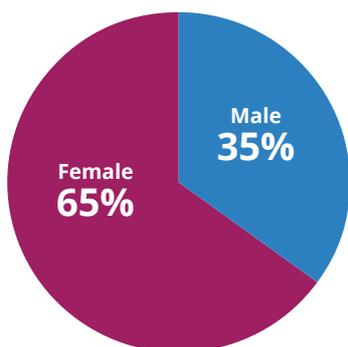
Of those victims almost two thirds are women and just over a third male.

Grouping victims into three broad exploitation categories; 13% suffered domestic servitude, 39% labour exploitation, and 48% sexual exploitation.

EXPLOITATION TYPES 2017

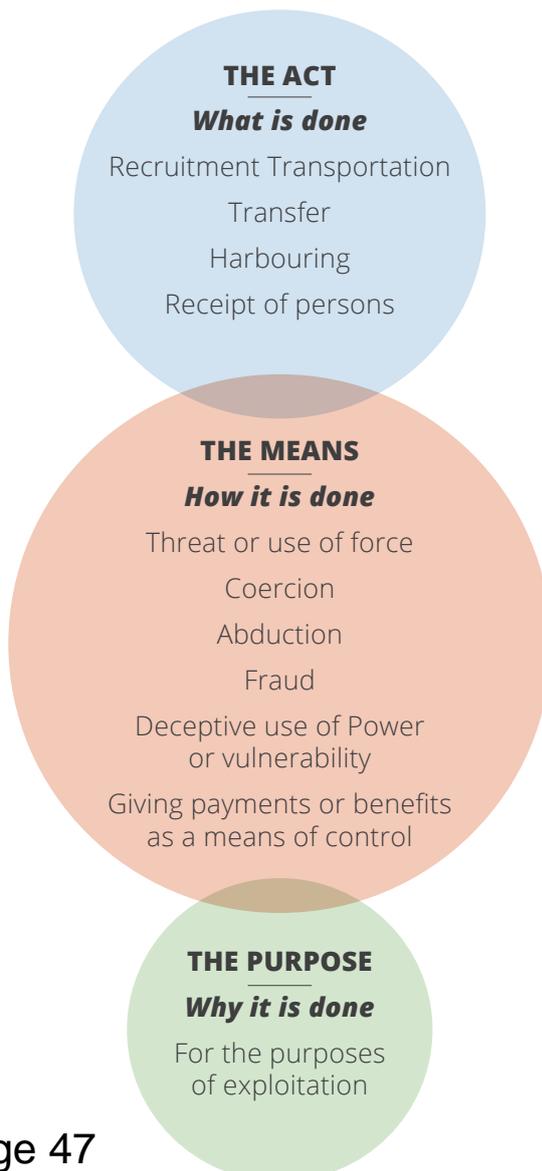


VICTIM GENDER 2017



PALERMO PROTOCOL

The Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children is a protocol of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It provides an internationally recognised definition for human trafficking. To be considered human trafficking, a situation must meet three conditions: The act (e.g. recruitment), the means (e.g. through the use of force or deception), and the purpose (e.g. for the purpose of forced labour). All three components must be present in an adult trafficking case. However in a child trafficking case the 'means' component is not required as they are not able to give informed consent.



⁴ Salvation Army – 2017 Annual Report

THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2015

The stated purpose of the Modern Slavery Act was to “tackle the worst exploitation” and consolidate various offences relating to human trafficking and slavery.

THE ACT:

- Established the role of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner with a UK-wide remit to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of modern slavery offences and the identification of victims.
- Provides victims with greater protections and police with greater powers. It also requires businesses to report on the action they are taking to identify and address slavery in their supply chains. Any organisation with a turnover greater than £36m needs to produce a Modern Slavery Act Annual Statement and have an Anti-Slavery Policy.
- Allows for the introduction of independent child trafficking advocates.
- Introduces new civil restriction orders, including a new reparation order to compensate victims where assets are confiscated from perpetrators.
- Brings in new statutory defence for victims who are compelled to commit crimes.

DEFINITIONS

Slavery Someone is in ‘slavery’ if they are:

- Forced to work through mental or physical threat
- Owned or controlled by an ‘employer’, usually through mental or physical abuse
- Dehumanised ~ treated as a commodity or bought and sold as ‘property’
- Physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom.⁵

Servitude⁶ is similar to slavery, in that a person is under an obligation to provide a service which is imposed on them, but there is no element of ownership.

Forced work⁷ is defined as ‘work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily⁶ and has been found in a number of different industries including manufacturing, food processing, agriculture and hospitality.

Human trafficking is when men, women and children are moved and forced into exploitation. The movement could be international but also within the country, from one city to another or even just a few streets. A person is a victim of human trafficking even if they haven't yet been exploited but have been moved for the purposes of exploitation.

Merseyside was the first police force to successfully prosecute under the act

⁵ www.unseenuk.org/about/the-problem/modern-slavery

⁶ www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-4-freedom-slavery-and-forced-labour

⁷ www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/definition/lang--en/index.htm

There are a number of different types of exploitation that victims of modern slavery may be subjected to, and victims may experience more than one type of exploitation at the same time. The most common forms of exploitation are:

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Organ harvesting: Victims are trafficked in order for their internal organs (typically kidneys or the liver) to be harvested for transplant.

Labour exploitation: A victim is made to work with little or no pay, and may face violence or threats. If they are foreign nationals, their passports may be confiscated by their exploiters and they may be made to live in unsafe conditions and under constant threat and control.

Domestic servitude: victims are forced to work in a household for little or no pay where they may be ill-treated, humiliated, subjected to exhausting hours, working and living under unsafe conditions under constant threat and control.

Forced criminality: Victims can be forced to participate in a range of illegal activities including pick pocketing, shop lifting, cannabis cultivation, county lines exploitation* and other activities. The Modern Slavery Act provides for a defence for victims who have been forced into criminality.

County lines: County Lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and towns using dedicated mobile phone lines – these are the county lines. It involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money.



A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark, sleeveless dress and black boots, stands in a doorway at night. She is looking out onto a street. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, reddish-brown glow from the interior and a cooler, blueish light from the street. In the background, a building with a window that has a green light is visible. The word "BACKGROUND" is overlaid in large, white, bold letters across the center of the image.

BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

In the UK, today and every day, thousands of men, women and children who are victims of modern slavery and human trafficking are being degraded and dehumanised.

These crimes are multi-faceted. Cases may involve single or multiple offenders or victims, and may be national or international, organised or opportunistic. They occur in both rural and metropolitan areas, in settings ranging from nail bars to construction sites, and involve activities from domestic servitude to the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation.

The National Crime Agency is the national law enforcement agency established in 2009 with the responsibility for tackling serious

and organised crime and reducing its impact on the UK and on our communities.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 builds on the **Modern Slavery Strategy** published by the Coalition Government in 2014. The UK is the first country in the world to have dedicated legislation in place to tackle modern slavery. Like the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, it is based around the 4Ps framework of pursue, prevent, protect and prepare:

	<p>PURSUE</p> <p>Prosecute and disrupt individuals and groups responsible for modern slavery</p>		<p>PROTECT</p> <p>Safeguard against modern slavery by protecting vulnerable people from exploitation</p>
	<p>PREVENT</p> <p>Prevent people from engaging in modern slavery</p>		<p>PREPARE</p> <p>Reduce the harm caused by modern slavery through improved victim identification and enforcement support</p>

The Government's Modern Slavery Strategy is particularly focussed on the law enforcement response, although the roles of Local Authorities in safeguarding and caring for children and tackling child sexual exploitation are particularly referenced.

In 2016 the Prime Minister announced a new Modern Slavery Taskforce, which sits at the center of Government, to drive further progress in tackling slavery and human trafficking.

THE GANGMASTERS LABOUR ABUSE AUTHORITY

The Immigration Act 2016 addresses labour exploitation and abuse in the UK and included measures to reform the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, renamed the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority, (GLAA). The GLAA was given additional powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), to investigate allegations of labour abuse in all aspects of UK business.

Since March 2017, modern slavery and human trafficking have been included in the group of national priority serious organised crime threats (alongside firearms, organised immigration crime, child sexual exploitation and abuse, cyber-crime and high-end money laundering).⁸

Police Regional Organised Crime Units, (ROCU), investigate and disrupt organised crime groups and act as a point of contact between Police Forces and the National Crime Agency. Merseyside Police Force is one of six police forces within the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit, 'Titan'.

NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensures they receive the appropriate support.

Referrals to the NRM can only be made by 'competent', (authorised), agencies known as 'First Responders.' These include all those working in Local Authorities, alongside Police, UK Border Force, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, and several NGOs including the Salvation Army.

The **Salvation Army** was awarded the Government contract in 2011 to provide alongside twelve subcontractors (including City Hearts, and the Medaille Trust used in Merseyside), specialist support to adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales:

- Safe accommodation
- Counselling
- Medical care
- Translation and interpretation services
- Medical care
- Legal counselling.

Being international and working in 131 countries, the Salvation Army also has projects in other countries to try to assist enslaved and trafficked people. It seeks to raise awareness, and where possible to support victims as they escape from their entrapment.⁹



MERSEYSIDE STRATEGY

Modern Slavery sits squarely within two of the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner's five priorities¹⁰:

- Tackle serious and organised crime
- Support victims, protect vulnerable people and maintain public safety

The Merseyside Modern Slavery Strategic Group has adopted the 4Ps framework of 'pursue, prevent, protect and prepare' reflecting the Government's Modern Slavery Strategy.

⁸ www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/790-nca-annual-report-2017-18/

⁹ www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery

¹⁰ <https://www.merseysidepcc.info/home/about-us/janes-priorities.aspx>

In 2017, UK referrals to the National Referral Mechanism increased by 35% on the previous year, from 3,805 to 5,145, whilst in Merseyside the increase was from 38 to 89, an increase of 134%.

In 2017 Merseyside made 89 referrals to the National Referral Mechanism of which there were 5 first responders. The graph below shows the number of referrals from each first responder:

Merseyside Police works closely with key partners to tackle organised crime and protect vulnerable victims. In April 2018 Merseyside Police deployed a dedicated unit of specialist officers to work closely with key stakeholders under Operation Sanctuary. This reflects both the increasing priority of Modern Slavery and the importance of working as a coordinated multi-agency unit.

As well as the central team there are five Police Officer SPOCs (Single Point of Contact), one for each Merseyside authority.





WIRRAL ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

As with most areas of the country Wirral has experienced a sharp increase in prosecutions made under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 since soon after its inception. Prosecutions have increased from 3 in 16/17 to 11 prosecutions in 17/18 and 12 during the first six months of 18/19.

The use of Modern Slavery legislation is expected to continue to increase across Wirral, Merseyside and nationally for the foreseeable future

The legislation predominately used to prosecute for Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking has been Sections 1 and 2 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This applies to both adults and minors (Under 18's) and whilst crime types such as Sexual

Exploitation, Labour Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation are common for adults, the legislation is also utilised to prosecute for Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation.

During **2016/17** there were 3 Modern Slavery offences in Wirral; one related to Labour Exploitation, one Criminal Exploitation and the other a Child Trafficking case.

In **2017/18**, 11 Modern Slavery offences were in Wirral, one related to Child Sexual Exploitation, three to Child Criminal Exploitation, two to Criminal Exploitation, two to sexual exploitation, and three to Labour Exploitation.

In the first half of **2018/19** there were 12 cases in Wirral of which five related to Child Criminal Exploitation, five to Child Sexual Exploitation and two related to Adults; one Labour Exploitation and one Criminal Exploitation.

Businesses identified as most likely to include workers vulnerable to exploitation through Modern Slavery have included car washes, nail salons, massage parlours, and from a criminal perspective; brothels and cannabis cultivations.

WIRRAL COUNCIL OBLIGATIONS

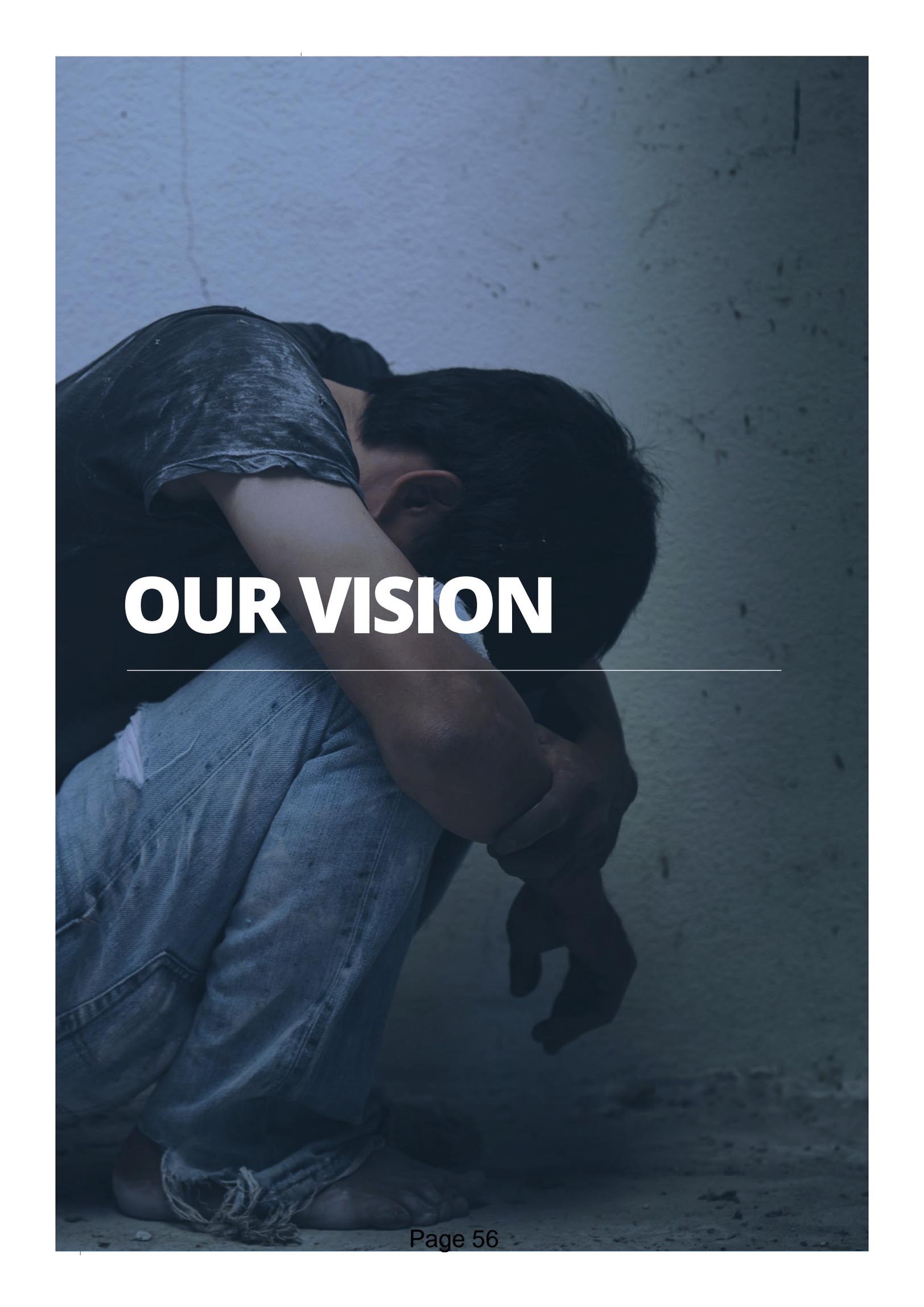
Wirral Council recognises its responsibilities under the Act to take a robust approach against modern slavery and human trafficking

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act Councils have a duty to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their areas, which includes modern slavery and trafficking.

There are two sections of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 Act that immediately impact on the obligations of Wirral Council:

- **Section 52** of the Act requires the Council (as an authorised agency and 'First Responder') to identify and refer modern slavery child victims and consenting adult victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- **Section 54** of the Act requires the Council to publish a statement of the steps it has taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, or in any part of its business



A person is crouching in a dark, textured environment, possibly a wall or a large piece of fabric. Their head is buried in their arms, and they appear to be in a state of distress or despair. The lighting is low, creating a somber and melancholic atmosphere. The person is wearing a dark, short-sleeved shirt and light-colored, worn-in jeans. The background is a mottled, greyish-blue color with some faint lines and textures.

OUR VISION

OUR VISION

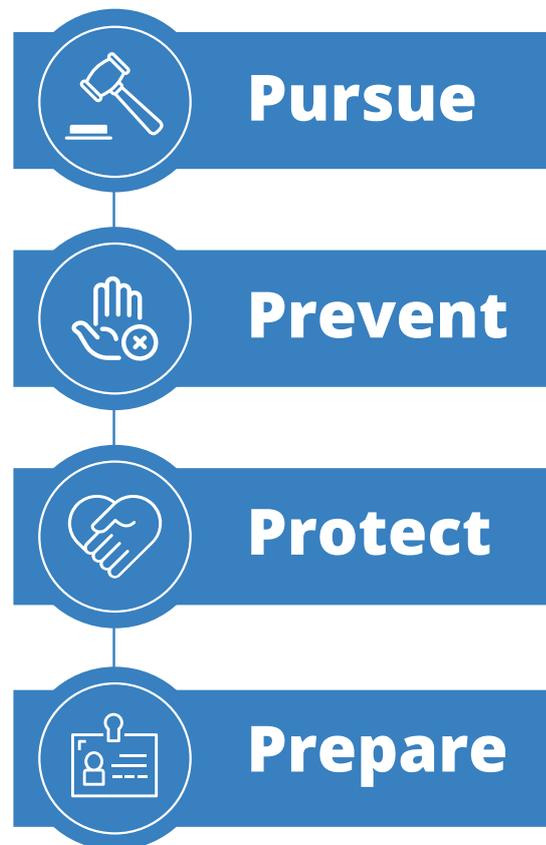
Modern Slavery exists on Wirral’s high streets, in local businesses and in our communities.

The victims are extremely vulnerable, scared and feel powerless to speak out. This ‘hidden’ crime must be uncovered and survivors rescued.

We will ensure that everyone with a stake in Wirral understands that Modern Slavery is happening, recognise the signs and know what to do when we see them.

It is up to Wirral’s public servants, businesses and community members, to give Modern Slavery victims a voice and put an end to their suffering, by working together in partnership to identify and protect them.

We will work in league with regional and national agencies in adopting the ‘4Ps’ framework:





PERPETRATORS WILL BE DETERRED, DISRUPTED AND PROSECUTED

WHY?

Enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies have between them a combined arsenal of tools and powers that can be used to disrupt the activities of those individuals and criminal networks involved in Modern Slavery.

The Safer Wirral Partnership Board oversees a range of effective partnership processes to prevent and reduce criminal behaviour and protect and safeguard potential victims. Within its governance arrangements the 'Safer Wirral Hub' operates a co-located multi agency body which is able to share enforcement information and is committed to protecting the most vulnerable.

The Police Modern Slavery 'Single Point of Contact' (SPOC) is an officer embedded within the Safer Wirral Hub, as the information conduit for both Wirral partners and Merseyside's 'Operation Sanctuary' partnership team.

HOW?

Apply all appropriate tools and powers to deter, disrupt and prosecute offenders

Ensure all partners share enforcement information

Build on the success of embedding Modern Slavery prevention into the Safer Wirral Hub



RAISE AWARENESS – IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES TO IDENTIFY VICTIMS

WHY?

It is vital that practitioners and public alike are aware of the signs and indicators of Modern Slavery so that they can respond.

Wirral will prioritise the prevention of Modern Slavery by raising awareness of the Modern Slavery agenda across all communities and increase its priority within existing networks which support and safeguard the vulnerable.

HOW?

Develop a Modern Slavery communications plan for practitioners and the public including multi agency training

Mainstream modern slavery across all areas of work

Prioritise Modern Slavery issues within existing networks which support and safeguard the vulnerable



PROTECT VULNERABLE PEOPLE FROM EXPLOITATION

WHY?

The vulnerabilities of victims are frequently re-exploited soon after the services available under the National Referral Mechanism come to an end.

In order to safeguard against repeat victimisation, the vulnerabilities particular to Modern Slavery victims needs to be understood and addressed. This understanding will come not only through new links forged with specialist support provided through the National Referral Mechanism but through existing grass roots community networks.

Early intervention and victim-focus are paramount for victims of Modern Slavery. This is well established within Wirral's crime reduction strategies, and needs to be rolled out amongst communities, partner agencies, and businesses.

HOW?

Promote links with both specialist support agencies and communities to ensure Modern Slavery survivors are given the ongoing support they require

Provide guidance to our suppliers to help them address coercive, abusive and exploitative work practices in their own business and their supply chains

Early intervention and victim-focus within communities, partners and businesses



COORDINATE PARTNERS TO PREVENT AND REPORT MODERN SLAVERY

WHY?

In both the safeguarding of victims and enforcement activity Modern Slavery involves partner agencies working at local, regional and national levels. Wirral's response will ensure strategic and operational coordination to avoid duplication or oversight.

As Modern Slavery victims become controlled and coerced their opportunity and ability to report becomes increasingly diminished providing very few opportunities to intervene, so it is imperative we make every contact count.

Frequently it will be a Wirral community member who becomes the first point of contact with whom Modern Slavery victims can confide. Our community voluntary and faith groups are the gatekeepers for our communities. They must be as involved and engaged as their agency counterparts to fight Modern Slavery as a coordinated unit.

HOW?

Coordination at strategic and operational levels to avoid duplication or oversight

Make every contact count to safeguard vulnerable victims of Modern Slavery

Voluntary, Community and Faith groups will be engaged, and involved in the identification, referral and support of victims of Modern Slavery

A close-up photograph of a hand gripping a thin, dark branch. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The image has a soft, slightly desaturated blue tint. The hand is positioned in the lower right quadrant, with fingers wrapped around the branch. The branch extends from the bottom left towards the top right.

MEASURING SUCCESS

MEASURING SUCCESS

To ensure the success of the strategy a comprehensive Wirral Modern Slavery Action Plan coordinates all activity amongst partners and communities.

This is a living document constantly updated to reflect best practise and emerging trends.

Within the Action Plan we will ensure the Strategy is underpinned by an outcomes framework that will measure the effectiveness of all actions under the core principals of the strategy.

We will evaluate the impact the impact of Wirral's Modern Slavery Action Plan through developing performance and quality measures that will be reported back to the Safer Wirral Partnership Board.

The success of this strategy will be monitored through the Safer Wirral Partnership Board

It is important that we not only judge our success on meeting targets set but also that our work is rooted in tangible outcomes improving the quality of people's lives in Wirral.

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National Crime Agency - Law enforcement steps up response to modern slavery

www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/1171-law-enforcement-steps-up-response-to-modern-slavery

REPORTING MODERN SLAVERY

In an emergency call:	999
To report a crime call the Police:	101
Crimestoppers (ring anonymously):	0800 500 111

For Help Guidance or to Report Modern Slavery in Wirral

Between Mon-Fri, 9:00am - 5.00pm Tel:	0151 606 2008
Outside of these hours:	0151 677 6557
Modern Slavery National Helpline:	0800 0121 700

If the identified individual has requested support contact

The Salvation Army (24/7 Support):	0300 3038 151
National Referral Mechanism - Forms and guidance:	
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms	



Wirral Council Supplier Code of Conduct

Document Details:

Owner/Lead Officer: Head of Commercial Procurement

Date: July 2019

Review Arrangements: Next Review Date – July 2021

Supplier Code of Conduct

Wirral Borough Council (the Council) is committed to operating ethically and complying with all applicable laws and regulatory requirements, including the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. As part of this commitment the Council requires Suppliers and Providers who do business with us to operate in full compliance with the laws, rules and regulations of the countries in which they operate and to seek similar commitments across their own supply chain.

This Supplier Code of Conduct sets out the main principles which the Council expects Suppliers to adhere to, as follows.

1. Law and Ethical Standards

The Supplier shall comply with all laws applicable to its business. The Supplier should support the principles of the following international conventions, in accordance with national law and practice:

- United Nations Global Compact;
- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The European Convention of Human Rights;
- 1998 International Labour Organisation (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

The Supplier shall also comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (UK legislation) (see section 3 – Modern Slavery).

Conflicts of interest must be avoided or managed

□ Suppliers shall avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work with the Council. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, relatives, friends and close associates, other than payment from the Council for the services they are contracted for. They shall declare any conflicts of interest and manage the conflict to the benefit of the Council.

Offers of gifts and hospitality should be avoided

- No gifts or hospitality shall be given or promised that could create suspicion of an intention to influence business transactions with the Council, or give the impression that individuals have been or may have been influenced in their Council duties (refer to Wirral Borough Council Policy on the Receipt of Gifts and Hospitality available on Wirral Borough Council website: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk>)

Improper payments/Bribery

- The supplier shall comply with international anti-bribery standards as stated in the United Nations' Global Compact and local anti-corruption and bribery laws including The Bribery Act 2010.
- Further information on relevant Council policy and practice can be found in the following documents, which are available on Wirral Borough Council website:
 - The Constitution (includes Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procedure Rules¹, Members' Code of Conduct and Officers' Code of Conduct)
 - Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
 - Confidential Reporting Procedure (Whistleblowing Policy)
 - Policy on the Receipt of Gifts and Hospitality
 - Anti-Money Laundering Policy
 - Anti-Bribery Policy

Anti-Competitive Behaviour

- Suppliers shall avoid practices that may be viewed as anticompetitive, for example sharing confidential or commercially sensitive information.

Unlawful discrimination of Customers/Service users should not take place

- Suppliers should always consider the requirements of equality law (in the UK the Equality Act 2010) in their supply of goods or services to customers and service users, and, ensure that goods and services are supplied without discrimination according to the law. Suppliers should ensure their staff are trained in/aware of these requirements and act accordingly.

2. Employment and Welfare Standards

We believe that suppliers should protect the human rights of their employees and treat them with dignity and respect. Suppliers are expected to provide a fair and ethical workplace which integrates appropriate employment and welfare standards practice into their business (including relevant health and safety legislation).

Employment is freely chosen

- There is no forced, bonded or involuntary prison labour.
- Workers are not required to lodge “deposits” or their identity papers with their employer and are free to leave their employer after reasonable notice.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected

- Workers, without distinction, have the right to join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively.
- The Supplier adopts an open attitude towards the activities of trade unions and their organisational activities. The Supplier is not involved in the practice of blacklisting, contrary to the Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010
- Workers’ representatives are not discriminated against and have access to carry out their respective functions in the workplace.
- Where the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining is restricted under law, the Supplier facilitates, and does not hinder, the development of parallel means for independent and free association and bargaining.

Working conditions are safe and hygienic and occupational health and safety is promoted and maintained

- A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Adequate steps shall be taken to prevent accidents and injury to health arising out of, associated with, or occurring in the course of work, by minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment.
- Workers shall receive regular and recorded health and safety training, and such training shall be repeated for new or reassigned workers.
- Accommodation, where provided, shall be clean, safe and meet the basic needs of the workers.
- The Supplier shall assign responsibility for health and safety to a senior management representative.
- The Supplier complies with applicable occupational health and safety regulations and good practice to provide a work environment that is conducive to the good health of employees, and prevents accidents and injury to both employees and others.

Child labour shall not be used

- There shall be no recruitment of child labour – the Supplier will comply with laws and regulations related to minimum working age. No employee of age any, including apprentices or vocational students, may be employed in breach of local regulations governing the minimum age of work or the compulsory age for schooling, consistent with ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138.

Living wages are paid

- Policies and programmes developed by the Supplier regarding child labour shall conform to the provisions of the relevant ILO standards.

- Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week meet, at a minimum, national legal standards or industry benchmark standards, whichever is the higher.
- All workers shall be provided with written and understandable information about their employment conditions in respect to wages before they enter employment.
- Deductions from wages as a disciplinary measure shall not be permitted nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the express permission of the worker concerned. All disciplinary measures should be recorded.

Working hours are not excessive

- Working hours shall comply with national laws and/or collective agreements.
- Where overtime is worked it must comply with national laws and/or collective agreements.
- Adult workers shall be entitled to either – (i) two uninterrupted rest periods each of not less than 24 hours in each 14 day period; or (ii) one uninterrupted rest period of not less than 48 hours in each such 14 day period.

Equality and Diversity

- The Council believes that the diversity of its population and workforce is one of its greatest strengths. Equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination are fundamental rights and this Council has a duty to exercise leadership to promote these rights. Contractors, suppliers and service providers must not treat any person less favourably than another person because of their race (including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality, age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity), religion or belief, or sexual orientation in any recruitment, training, promotion, delivery of goods, provision of services or undertaking of works. Contractors, suppliers and service providers must follow best

practice and comply with all legislation in relation to equality and diversity and be consistent with Wirral Council's Equality Plan (the Council's key equality policy document).

Contractors, suppliers and service providers will provide the Council on request with copies of:

- Instructions to those concerned with recruitment, promotion and training.
- Equality & diversity policies, procedures and other documents available to employees, recognised trade unions or other representative groups of employees.
- Recruitment advertisements or other literature.

In order to assist the Council in its objectives under the Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG), contractors, suppliers and service providers must demonstrate that they have an understanding and commitment to the principles and practice of equality in the services they provide. They must also regularly review their services and access to them to ensure they continue to be appropriate and accessible to Wirral's diverse communities.

Regular employment is provided

- To every extent possible work performed shall be on the basis of recognised employment relationship established through national law and practice.
- Obligations to employees under labour or social security laws and regulations arising from regular employment relationship shall not be avoided through the excessive use of labour only contracting, sub-contracting, or home-working arrangements, or through apprenticeship schemes where there is no real intent to impart skills or provide regular employment, nor shall any such obligations be avoided through the excessive use of fixed term contracts of employment.

No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed

- Physical abuse or discipline, the threat of physical abuse, sexual or other harassment and verbal abuse or other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

3. Modern Slavery

Wirral Borough Council is committed to better understand our supply chains and working towards greater transparency and responsibility towards people working in them in accordance with our policy of observing the spirit of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Wirral is signed up to the [Cooperative Party Charter Against Modern Slavery](#).

The Co-operative Party's Charter Against Modern slavery goes further than existing law and guidance, committing councils to proactively vetting their own supply chain to ensure no instances of modern slavery are taking place.

Where suppliers are required to submit a Modern Slavery Statement (i.e. have an annual turnover of £36m or more) they should do so.

Suppliers are required to observe the spirit of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

- Suppliers shall ensure they are not directly engaged in slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour or human trafficking.
- Suppliers shall take reasonable and proportionate steps, having regard to the nature of their business, to identify potential high and medium risks of slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour or human trafficking in their supply chains. To the extent it is commercially practicable suppliers should use their buying power to influence their suppliers from such prohibited activities.
- Suppliers shall be prepared to provide to the Council names and geographical locations of their own suppliers, to the extent that these are the source of products supplied to the Council.
- Suppliers shall permit any of the Council's staff, consultants acting on its behalf or similar, to inspect the supplier's premises and interact with workers without notice at any reasonable time.

4. Sustainability, Environment & Social Responsibility

The Council is committed to reducing our environmental impact and suppliers are expected to consider their environmental performance and procedures to minimise any negative impact on the environment, community and natural resources. Suppliers should also be aware of their social responsibility and seek to optimise opportunities to deliver social value² benefits to the citizens of Wirral.

Suppliers are expected to comply with current UK Environmental Legislation and other legislative and best practice requirements

- Suppliers shall approach sustainability as a process of continuous improvement and look to realise the positive sustainability benefits and manage the negative sustainability impacts relative to their core business activities over the lifespan of contracts with the Council.

Suppliers should be aware of how their activity can contribute to wider social impact for the community

- Suppliers should seek to support and contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of the communities they work in.

5. Compliance with the Supplier Code of Conduct

The Council expects Suppliers throughout the supply chain to support the principles contained in the Code of Conduct, and to actively communicate and promote the principles to their own supply chains. The Council reserves the right to request details of how Suppliers and their supply chains comply with the Supplier Code of Conduct and take action where appropriate, including termination of the business relationship and/or legal action.

The Council's contract managers may visit (and/or appoint external partners to visit) the Supplier (or their sub-contractors or agents) to assess compliance with the Code.

6. Review of Code of Conduct

Responsible Officer: Head of Commissioning and Head of Corporate Procurement

Review date: October 2019 (or as required in the event of changes in legislation etc.)

MODERN SLAVERY

Scrutiny Report of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

November 2018



WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Modern Slavery

SCRUTINY REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

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Appendix 1: Scoping Document

Appendix 2: Draft Modern Slavery Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work programme, it was agreed to undertake a Task & Finish Scrutiny Review on Modern Slavery. The Review Panel comprised three Members of the Committee.

The report sets the methodology adopted for gathering the evidence, followed by the main body of the report which details the key findings of the review and the recommendations of the Review Panel.

2. MEMBERS OF THE TASK & FINISH REVIEW PANEL

Councillor Chris Carubia (Chair)



CHAIR'S PERSONAL STATEMENT

"Our objective in this review was to help the council to develop an appropriate policy and look at other potential responses to tackle Modern Slavery in Wirral. It was pleasing to see that, during the review, a strategy was developed and the Review Panel had an opportunity to study and add to it. It is important that Members retain oversight of Modern Slavery in Wirral, not only to fulfil their role, but also to ensure Wirral is doing its utmost to tackle it."

Other Panel Members were:

Councillor Christina Muspratt



Councillor Tom Usher



3. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW

3.1 Scope

A scoping meeting for the scrutiny review was convened and the agreed scoping document is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.2 Methodology

The scrutiny review was informed through:

- Meeting key frontline staff from areas which may interface with Modern Slavery.
- Attendance at relevant Modern Slavery conferences.
- Undertaking document reviews on local best practice.

The Review Panel also considered the draft Modern Slavery Strategy which was developed following the commencement of the scrutiny review.

4. OVERVIEW OF MODERN SLAVERY

Modern slavery is an umbrella term and captures a wide range of types of exploitation. According to the [National Crime Agency](#), these include:

- **sexual exploitation** - Sexual exploitation involves any non-consensual or abusive sexual acts performed without a victim's permission
- **Forced labour** – Forced / compulsory labour involves victims being compelled to work very long hours, often in hard conditions without relevant training and equipment, and to hand over the majority if not all of their wages to their traffickers.
- **Forced criminality** - victims can be forced to participate in a range of illegal activities including pick pocketing, shop lifting, cannabis cultivation, county lines exploitation and other activities. The Modern Slavery Act provides for a defence for victims who have been forced into criminality.
- **Domestic Servitude** - Domestic servitude involves the victim being forced to work in private households. Their movement will often be restricted and they will be forced to perform household tasks such as child care and house-keeping over long hours and for little if any pay. Victims will lead very isolated lives and have little or no unsupervised freedom. Their own privacy and comfort will be minimal, often sleeping on a mattress on the floor in an open part of the house.
- **Organ harvesting** - Organ harvesting involves trafficking people in order to use their internal organs for transplant
- **Child exploitation** - Persons under the age of 18 who get caught up in aspects of criminal exploitation. They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by individual opportunists, traffickers and organised crime groups.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015, ("the Act"), gained royal Assent on 26 March 2015. Its stated purpose was to "tackle the worst exploitation" and consolidate various offences relating to human trafficking and slavery.

The Act established the role of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner with a UK-wide remit to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of modern slavery offences and the identification of victims.

The Act makes it incumbent upon any organisation with a turnover greater than £36m to produce a Modern Slavery Act Annual Statement and have an Anti-Slavery Policy.

There are two sections of the Act that immediately impact on the obligations for Wirral Council:

- Section 52 of the Act requires the Council to identify and refer modern slavery child victims and consenting adult victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- Section 54 of the Act requires the Council to publish a statement of the steps it has taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, or in any part of its business.

The NRM is the process by which victims of modern slavery, including human trafficking, are recorded. The NRM was extended to all victims of modern slavery - both children and adults - in England and Wales following the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Centre for the Study of International Slavery - Conference

To inform the scrutiny review, one member of the Review Panel and the Scrutiny Officer attended a conference hosted by the Centre for the Study of International Slavery and reported back to the panel. This conference was arranged to release a report entitled "[Fresh Start – Integrating Survivors of Modern Slavery](#)" which was developed by the Centre for the Study of International Slavery and City Hearts.

The Centre for the Study of International Slavery is a collaboration between the University of Liverpool and the International Slavery Museum. City Hearts works with up to 300 modern slavery survivors in the North West on a weekly basis. It provides a range of accommodation and support services including safe houses, outreach support services and long term support to over 120 survivors via 5 drop-in hubs across the North West. Survivors are offered counselling, welfare advice, and support to access employment.

The Fresh Start report provides an evaluation of a long-term support system for modern slavery survivors, set up by City Hearts. Members of the Review Panel noted the key point raised by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner at the conference regarding the current lack of medium and long-term support available to survivors of modern slavery. Under the National Referral Mechanism, support is provided to victims for a period of 45 days. After this period, support can cease abruptly and this has been described as a 'cliff edge' for survivors. At this point, survivors are at great risk of falling back into modern slavery due to the lack of meaningful support, access to housing, benefits and employment.

City Hearts has set up the Integration Support Programme as a sustainable solution to this challenge of long term support. Through collaboration with the business and voluntary sector, survivors are offered a clear pathway to a more stable and secure future through employment coaching and one to one support.

5.2 Merseyside Approach - 'Tackling Modern Slavery in the Liverpool City Region' Conference

A conference was held to gather all agencies and stakeholders from relevant statutory, voluntary, charitable and faith sectors in the Merseyside area with an interest in fighting modern slavery. The aim was to map the regional assets, understand potential gaps and to consider ways to co-ordinate activity and create a local network of practitioners. The Scrutiny Officer attended the conference on behalf of the Panel. Key speakers at the conference included:

[The Clewer Initiative](#)

The Clewer Initiative is a 3 year project that enables Church of England dioceses and wider Church networks to develop strategies to detect modern slavery in their communities, and help provide victim support and care. It is believed that the church is well placed within communities to tackle modern slavery.

[City Hearts](#)

The speaker acknowledged the range of good work going on to end modern slavery and stressed the necessity for more efficient joined up working between agencies.

[Medaille Trust](#)

The Medaille Trust is a charity founded by groups of Religious congregations in 2006 to work against human trafficking in response to the plight of thousands of people who are being trafficked into the UK each year.

The conference also allowed stakeholders to discuss mapping anti-slavery resources in the local system. A summary of the key ideas which were supported by all stakeholders included:

- Drawing up a local map showing responsibilities of organisations which aims

to avoid duplication and assist in identifying gaps. A requirement for a clear and consistent message from all organisations was agreed. As an example, it was noted that the major agencies involved in fighting slavery (The Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority, Modern Slavery Helpline, Crimestoppers, Stop the Traffik) have different contact telephone numbers and online reporting arrangements.

- Standard training should be in place to assist front line staff including NHS, Social Services, and GPs to spot signs of Modern Slavery and to understand referral processes. Stakeholders were informed that Merseyside Police offers free awareness raising training to local health providers and local authority staff in the region.
- The introduction of a regional scheme to recognise trades and businesses as “Slavery Free”. This could be used to raise awareness with the public and to promote good practice with local businesses. Similar ‘gold standard’ schemes exist in other industries, such as food standards or sports clubs.
- The development of a Merseyside wide network of key anti-slavery contacts across different agencies (including statutory and charitable, voluntary and faith sectors).
- A regional modern slavery awareness raising campaign should be considered alongside the National Crime Agency media campaign.

Members of the Review Panel endorsed these suggestions. Furthermore, these were also acknowledged by Wirral’s Strategic Commissioner for Environment, Community Services & Resilience and it is understood that a number of actions are being undertaken as a result. This includes developing a Regional Ethical Organisations Scheme in partnership with Wirral Chamber of Commerce which will carry a “Quality Mark” for businesses. Modern Slavery will form a part of this standard. Additionally, key contacts and networks are also being developed through the Safer Wirral Hub and the City Region and Partnership events on Modern Slavery.

5.3 Document Reviews - Local Authority Responses to Modern Slavery

The Review Panel reviewed a number of documents which gave examples of good practice by organisations across the U.K. in their response to Modern Slavery.

Merseyrail

In response to the Modern Slavery Act, Merseyrail has produced and published a Modern Slavery statement. The statement can be found on the Merseyrail website or via the public Modern Slavery registries mentioned previously. The statement outlines Merseyrail’s commitment to tackling the issue of Modern Slavery by ensuring their supply chains are slavery free.

<http://www.merseyrail.org/about-merseyrail/our-values-behaviours/merseyrail-s-anti-slavery-and-human-trafficking.aspx>

Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council has a dedicated webpage which helps users identify victims of modern slavery and human trafficking within the community. The website also gives advice on reporting suspicions and provides service users with a helpline number and online form.

Basildon Council

Basildon also has an advice page on their website for people worried about trafficking and modern slavery.

Nottingham City Council

Nottingham City Council’s Modern Slavery statement states that they have taken a number of steps to tackle modern slavery and have further steps planned. As a Council, Nottingham recognises that for certain members of staff, modern slavery training to raise awareness is invaluable and have taken steps to review their training policy.

Marks & Spencer

According to a report by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC), Marks & Spencer are leading the way in terms of tackling Modern Slavery. The company now provides bespoke Modern Slavery training to all Marks & Spencer food suppliers. In addition, all UK Marks & Spencer food suppliers employing migrant workers are required to attend Stronger Together workshops, cascade the training within their supply chains. Over 200 attendees from the M&S supply base have taken part in this training to date.

Cheshire Modern Slavery Strategy

The Cheshire Modern Slavery Strategy was also reviewed by the Review Panel and the particular strong features of the strategy were highlighted:

Cheshire-wide Strategy

The Modern Slavery Strategy for Cheshire was published in 2017 by Cheshire East, Halton, Warrington, Cheshire West and Chester Councils and Cheshire Constabulary. These partners have worked collaboratively to develop a Pan-Cheshire strategy to address modern slavery in Cheshire over the next two years.

Succinct and Clear Message

The Strategy provides a brief explanation of modern slavery, the forms it can take, its impact on victims and statistics demonstrating the extent of the problem in the UK. There is also a short summary of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act and the powers and responsibilities this bestows on local authorities.

Case Studies & Ongoing Operations in Cheshire

The Strategy relates the issue to the local area with descriptions of operations to break-up slavery and trafficking activities in towns across Cheshire.

Simple Vision and Clear Priorities

The document contains a simple and unambiguous vision. This is underpinned by four priorities, aimed at embedding the Modern Slavery Act, raising awareness, supporting victims and prosecuting offenders.

Spotting Signs of Modern Slavery and Reporting

Finally, clear advice is provided on how to spot the signs of modern slavery and how to report suspicions.

The Panel was interested in how a partnership approach may be replicated in Merseyside to strengthen the message and increase the impact of anti-slavery initiatives. The clarity of message was noted, especially the use of local case studies to help readers put this into context within their community. The Review Panel also welcomed the simplicity of the vision and choice of universal priorities, together with advice regarding spotting slavery and reporting suspicions.

A number of local authorities publish annual Modern Slavery Statements on their websites, including Nottingham City Council, Essex County Council and Belfast City Council. The Panel also reviewed a Modern Slavery Policy and Statement produced by Telford & Wrekin Council, which outlines the Council's responsibilities and commits to a zero-tolerance approach to Modern Slavery. Both of these documents are published on the [Telford & Wrekin website](#)

5.4 Wirral's Frontline Services

In order to gather evidence of existing Wirral Council practice and to understand how the council could interact with Modern Slavery, the Review Panel sought to meet with key staff from a number of front line areas. Members spoke with representatives of the Council's Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing departments and discussed the main areas where Council officers might encounter instances of modern slavery and human trafficking.

1. Cockle and Mussel picking

The North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NWIFCA) are responsible for the cockle and mussel beds off Wirral's Northern coastline, whilst Natural Resources Wales (NRW) manage the cockle fishery within the Dee Estuary.

Both NWIFCA and NRW are responsible for issuing and managing permits for cockle and mussel fishing. Their primary aims are to manage the beds and secure the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry. Wirral Council pays a precept to NWIFCA to manage the fishing beds and Wirral's Cabinet Member for Environment sits on the NWIFCA Board.

The Gangmasters Licensing and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) is responsible for the licensing and regulation of organised commercial shellfish picking and their role is to ensure that all businesses who provide workers on the cockle and mussel beds meet the employment standards required by law.

Wirral Council's primary interest is to ensure food safety once the catch crosses the high tide (mean high water) line, (i.e. once cockles and mussels are brought to shore they are considered by Wirral Council as food to be sold commercially). This would be considered as a low risk food assuming the shellfish are gathered from a classified (and thus microbiologically tested) bed. Issues around litter and the misuse of sites leading to the beds (i.e. Leasowe coastal car parks) are also a concern for the Council. At the start of the season an inter-agency meeting is arranged prior to the opening of the North shore beds. NIFCA, GLAA and Wirral Council attend this meeting. Information is shared between agencies, including details of the permit holders, and numbers of people on the sand etc.

2. Formal Requests from Merseyside Police for intelligence and multi-agency operations.

Merseyside Police make requests for intelligence or multi-agency operations including HMRC, utility companies, UK Immigration Service etc. Food hygiene and trading standards regulations can be used as a way of gaining access to premises to disrupt criminal activities. There are good working relationships between Wirral and other agencies including UK Border Patrol, HMRC and UK Immigration Services, but it is acknowledged that these relationships are largely informal. Each agency has their own resource issues and as a result often only acts on high profile or large scale operations. Merseyside Police leads on multi-agency operations.

3. Project Based Work

Multi-agency project work such as the 'Reduce the Strength' (RTS) and 'Eat Well Wirral' (EWW) campaigns have increased the knowledge and experience of Wirral staff in identifying indicators of criminal activity including modern slavery and trafficking. Through work with other agencies such as the Police, Wirral Officers are now more experienced in asking questions designed to unearth modern slavery or trafficking, such as asking workers questions about days off or normal working hours. It was accepted that outside of project work, no pro-active work or activity to target modern slavery took place. There was no dedicated resource for Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards teams to carry out operations or activity to detect Modern Slavery in Wirral businesses.

The Panel acknowledged the resource issue and was concerned that no systematic detection arrangements are in place regarding modern slavery in Wirral. Project work has helped to increase the knowledge and understanding of some Wirral staff, but detection remained largely 'hit and miss'.

4. Routine Operations

Officers visiting business premises, including fast food restaurants and off licences as part of routine inspections, report any obvious signs of modern slavery, such as multiple beds in rooms and other indicators. This is reported to the Police and then officers continue with their

routine work. It is acknowledged that this is not pro-active detection or prevention and it was also noted that officers who have not worked on multi-agency projects may be less experienced in spotting signs of modern slavery.

The language barrier can be an issue for officers as it can be difficult to capture and relay information to workers during inspections. To help with this, one officer has created a crib-sheet of basic questions in a number of different languages, based on the most common languages and nationalities that they encounter in Wirral.

Unregulated and Low-Priority Businesses. A number of business types are either unregulated (e.g. nail bars) or considered by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as low priority (e.g. car washes). HSE guidance to local authorities encourages a focus on high priority health & safety issues such as heavy machinery and working at heights. Due to staff capacity, officers are only able to inspect high priority areas. As a result, officers do not routinely visit these premises - even if there is an increasing perception that this type of business is known to operate Modern Slavery practices.

Staff Expertise. Due to the wide ranging responsibilities of Trading Standards and Environmental Health teams, and the impact of reduced staffing, it can be difficult to keep staff competency and expertise levels to a high level. Public safety areas such as gas safety and legionella are prioritised for training along with highly prescriptive requirements pertaining to food hygiene competencies. Networking with colleagues from neighbouring local authorities takes place, with Mutual Aid Agreements in place to aid with risk management and planning.

It was noted by the Review Panel that intelligence from Wirral Trading Standards and Environmental Health officers led to recent high profile prosecutions in Wirral and these staff have been recommended for commendations. Furthermore, as an outcome of the Review Panel's discussions, the Strategic Commissioner for Environment, Community Services & Resilience reported that Trading Standards, Licensing and Environmental Health now report into the Safer Wirral Hub. To further support intelligence gathering and connectivity with Modern Slavery, a police officer is now integrated 2 days a week to link investigation activity across modern slavery and associated crime and this was supported by the Review Panel.

5.5 Development of a Modern Slavery Strategy for Wirral

During the review, the Panel identified a requirement for Wirral Council to develop and publish a Modern Slavery Statement and accompanying policy / action plan to comply with the Modern Slavery Act. In addition, Wirral Council received a publication entitled 'Modern Slavery, A Council Guide' from the Local Government Association which is endorsed by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. This is a high level guide for councils in England and provides an overview of the steps councils can take to understand and tackle modern slavery within their area. The guide covers:-

- Identification and referral of victims
- Safeguarding and supporting victims
- Community safety and disrupting modern slavery crimes
- Public procurement (ensuring that council supply chains are slavery-free)

In response to the requirement to develop a Modern Slavery policy / statement, and to comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, Wirral Council officers moved forward to develop a Modern Slavery Strategy that was consistent with guidance produced by the LGA. It is noted that the guidance also details:

- The need to create awareness of modern slavery at all levels, including ward councilors, council staff, the public and the voluntary sector in terms of identifying and reporting it;
- The identification of training within councils at all levels to recognise the issues; and

- The role of overview & Scrutiny to challenge their councils to justify actions, or lack of them.

It was further agreed that the draft strategy would be presented to the Review Panel to conclude the review and a session was subsequently arranged for this. The draft strategy is included as **Appendix 2**. A summary of the key points raised at that session are detailed below:

- The draft strategy was developed consistent with LGA guidance. The Strategic Commissioner for Environment, Community Services & Resilience noted the Panel's endorsement of the strategy produced by Cheshire West and Chester and adopted key aspects of it. In addition, Wirral's strategy dovetails with both the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside's Modern Slavery Strategic Group and the Merseyside Police Modern Slavery partnership initiative, 'Operation Sanctuary', without losing sight of localism for Wirral.
- The strategy has been shared with key agencies and officers, including Adult Care and Health, Children's Services, Public Health, Corporate Strategy, Early Help and Prevention, Community Safety, Housing Services and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services and Merseyside Police. Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards were also engaged as a result of initial feedback from Members.
- The strategy details a national picture for Modern Slavery, including the plan to tackle it and key statistics. At a local level, Wirral enforcement activity is detailed and it is noted that the number of offences has increased. Three offences were reported in 2016/17, eleven in 2017/18 and 12 in the first half of 2018/19. The increase is partly due to the complexity of the cases and the time taken for cases to come through but also increased awareness and coordination across agencies and communities.
- Members were assured that there will be appropriate governance arrangements in place. The Safer Wirral Partnership Board (SWPB) oversees a range of effective partnership processes to prevent and reduce criminal behaviour, and also to protect and safeguard potential victims. The Board will administer and deliver Wirral's obligations for Modern Slavery.
- In conjunction with the strategy, an Action Plan is being developed to show how Wirral is addressing the risk of Modern Slavery. Members suggested that this Action Plan is presented to a future Overview & Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny. Additionally, performance measures will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny Members as part of quarterly performance reporting. The Review Panel suggested that performance reporting should also be presented to Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee as well as Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Although Members did not liaise with Wirral's Safeguarding Team, it was reported that the Lead Officer for Modern Slavery is a member of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The Adults Board has moved to a City Region Adults Safeguarding Board and has representation from Adults, Children's and Strategic Housing. This is a partnership of all members of the Safer Wirral Partnership Board and therefore will be engaged on Modern Slavery through this forum as well as having oversight of Wirral Councils Modern Slavery Work Plan.
- Members received assurance that those cases involving language barriers would be managed appropriately. The Wirral Family Safety Unit has access to translation/interpreting services for domestic abuse which could be utilised. There are also a number of multi-national officers that work in the Wirral Safer hub which cover a wide range of languages. The Modern Slavery Strategy will also be published in other languages and braille for wider circulation.
- The Review Panel noted that there was no reference to Women's Refuge as a key contact and there was concern that there may be a number of cases where females, particularly with poor English, may only want to speak to another female and to also seek immediate accommodation.

- In respect to cases where an individual may not feel comfortable contacting the Police, Members were informed that, nationally, the Salvation Army will be the lead for support. Their contact number was therefore included in the strategy and Wirral will be working with them closely.
- The Panel identified the need to ensure younger people were engaged when creating awareness about Modern Slavery. It was accepted by the Lead Commissioner for Communities and Resilience that there could be more focus on developing a strategy aimed at young people and liaising with schools to create awareness.
- Although raised as a concern, the Panel was assured that support mechanisms are in place for individuals to ensure they do not become trapped in the system again through safeguarding teams, and emergency accommodation. In terms of specialist accommodation, Wirral commissions a refuge and has successfully bid to put further accommodation units in place. Importantly, Members welcomed the option to move individuals outside of the area if appropriate, as is currently the case with Looked After Children.
- The Panel supports the '4 Ps framework' (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) being adopted in the Strategy. It is noted that the strategy addresses the Modern Slavery Act's requirement for referring child victims and consenting adults through the National Referral Mechanism. All calls coming in to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) / Safer Wirral Hub are coordinated by the SPOC (Single Point of Contact) who is a Police Officer embedded within the service.
- Members were assured that the Modern Slavery Act's requirement for the Council to publish a statement of the steps it has taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place within its supply chains, or in any part of its business, will be undertaken. Wirral's 'Modern Slavery Transparency Statement' will be signed by the Chief Executive of Wirral Council and the leader of Wirral Council. This will be published on Wirral's Website demonstrating Wirral's zero tolerance commitment and outlining the policies and steps it has taken ensuring that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any part of its supply chains or any part of its business.
- The Review Panel recognised the importance of community groups and other stakeholders in dealing with Modern Slavery from the scrutiny review and it is now understood that a launch event to raise awareness for these stakeholders is being planned for early 2019. This was welcomed by the Review Panel.

Recommendation 1

The work and contents of this report is considered before the draft Modern Slavery Strategy is referred to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendation 2

A Council webpage is developed to raise awareness of Modern Slavery, to provide a link to the Modern Slavery Strategy and advice on who to contact.

Recommendation 3

Overview & Scrutiny receives a report detailing the impact and effectiveness of the Modern Slavery Strategy and Action Plan in twelve months.

In undertaking this review, Members of the Review Panel identified a number of other areas that it considers appropriate to enable Wirral Council to strengthen its responsibilities to deal with Modern Slavery. With the immediate recognition of the requirement to develop a Modern

Slavery Strategy, the Review Panel believes this should complement the strategy moving forward for Wirral.

The requirement for dedicated Modern Slavery training

The Review Panel recognised the need for Modern Slavery training for appropriate staff and Members to raise awareness and to ensure responsibilities are understood. In particular, the training other organisations and local authorities have carried out to raise the profile and potential organisational impact on Modern Slavery was noted by Members. This is also highlighted by the LGA in its guidance document. The Review Panel recognises the responsibility of Members in relation to Modern Slavery. Therefore, there needs to be specific training in place for Members to identify instances of Modern Slavery, and how cases/referrals should be reported. It is suggested that Members of the Review Panel, in liaison with the appropriate council officer, identify how this training should be delivered to ensure it is appropriate for the role of an elected member.

Recommendation 4

To raise awareness of Modern Slavery in Wirral, it is recommended that:

- i) Dedicated training is provided to front-line staff, including multi-agency, and staff who may come into contact with Modern Slavery.
- ii) Dedicated Elected Member training is developed that is specific to the role of members. It is further recommended that the Review Panel is delegated to identify the specific requirements of the training and to ensure the needs of Members are met.

The Review Panel identified the need to ensure there is a regional response to Modern Slavery and to ensure that Wirral joins any regional anti-slavery multi-agency networks that emerge. This is essential in order to share ideas and good practice in combatting Modern Slavery. This was evidenced through feedback to the Review Panel of the outcomes of the Liverpool City Region conference. It is understood that Wirral Council's Modern Slavery Strategy will link to the wider City Region through the Safer Wirral Hub initiative. The Lead Officer for Modern Slavery and their team will engage with the Police and Crime Commissioner as well as the City Region Group in relation to protecting vulnerable people, of which Modern Slavery is part of.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that Wirral explores all existing and emerging anti-slavery multi-agency networks with a view to joining them to in order to help combat Modern Slavery.

6.0 Conclusions

The Modern Slavery Panel set out this review with the objective to understand the implications of Modern Slavery for Wirral Council and its partners through exploring best practice for its implementation as well as understanding existing local detection, prevention and victim support arrangements. These objectives were achieved through a programme of activities including attending conferences on Modern Slavery, undertaking document reviews on local best practice and holding evidence sessions with key officers from front-facing services.

This review should enable an ongoing reporting line for Overview & Scrutiny with a dedicated Officer being responsible for ensuring the delivery of the Modern Slavery Strategy & Action Plan. Members will hold the Council and its partners to account over the effectiveness of services in place to protect Wirral residents from Modern Slavery which was required as an outcome from this review. Through the development and implementation of the Modern Slavery Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, Wirral will ensure compliance with the provisions of the Modern Slavery Act and will lead on efforts to tackle Modern Slavery within Wirral.

APPENDIX 1

Scope Document

Review Title: Modern Slavery

Responsible Committee: Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4th September 2017

1. Contact Information:	
<p>Panel Members: Councillors: Christopher Carubia (Chair) Christina Muspratt Tom Usher</p>	<p>Key Officers: Mark Camborne, Lead Commissioner Community Services & Resilience Patrick Torpey, Scrutiny Officer Michael Lester, Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>Other Contacts: Not applicable at this stage</p>
2. Review Aims:	
<p>Wirral Plan Pledge/s:</p> <p>The primary pledge associated with this review is Wirral's Neighbourhoods Are Safe. Additional associated pledges:</p> <p>Reduce child and family poverty Vulnerable children reach their full potential Young people are ready for work and adulthood Children are ready for school Wirral residents live healthier lives</p> <p>Review Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To understand the implications of the Modern Slavery Act for Wirral Council and its partners.2. To review and assess the emerging best practice in this field to inform how the Modern Slavery Act may be implemented by Wirral Council and its partners.3. To review existing local arrangements with regard to the prevention and detection of modern slavery and the support services offered to victims. <p>Scrutiny Outcomes:</p> <p>The Panel will present a series of recommendations designed to shape or influence Council policy on modern slavery.</p> <p>Members will hold the Council and its partners to account over the effectiveness of services in place to protect Wirral residents from modern slavery.</p> <p>Wirral Council becomes compliant with the provisions of the Modern Slavery Act and leads on efforts to tackle it locally.</p>	
3. Review Plan	
<p>Review Approach: Workshop, Evidence Day, Task and Finish? Task and Finish.</p>	

The review will be carried out through via a series of evidence gathering sessions with Wirral Council officers and other partner organisations.

The Panel will also review a number of briefing papers, documents and publications from local and central government, government advisory bodies and leading charities in the modern slavery / human trafficking field.

Review Duration:

(2 to 3 months expected)

Scheduled Committee Report Date:

July 2018

Scheduled Cabinet Report Date:

To be confirmed

4. Sources of Evidence:

Key Witnesses (subject to availability):

Expert Witnesses

- City Hearts - Phill Clayton, Regional Director of City Hearts.
- University of Liverpool / Centre for the Study of International Slavery – Dr Alex Balch
- Local Government Information Unit / Local Government Association

Wirral Council and Partner Organisations

- Wirral Council – Safeguarding (Adults & Children), Trading Standards, Licensing, Private Sector Housing Team
- Merseyside Police – (Supt. Tracey Hayes, Safer Wirral Hub)
- Wirral Registered Social Landlords

Supporting Papers / Documentation:

A number of briefing papers and supporting documentation will be reviewed by the panel, including:

- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Local Authority guidance / policies / best practice on modern slavery
- City Hearts, University of Liverpool Fresh Start Report
- ATMG Hidden In Plain Sight executive summary
- Human Trafficking Foundation Report
- Salvation Army bulletin

Involvement of service users / public:

Not applicable for this review

5. Key Communications:

Cabinet Member:

The scoping document and final report will be shared with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Press Office:

Not applicable at this stage

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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