

CABINET

Monday, 27 July 2020

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

102 LEADER'S UPDATE

Councillor Pat Hackett welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the Cabinet as the Council would have new governance arrangements from the Annual Council Meeting (A Committee System) scheduled for 28 September 2020. Councillor Hackett informed that this was the first Cabinet meeting to be held remotely. He then drew Cabinet Members' attention to the following facts about the Cabinet:

The Cabinet had been created following the Local Government Act 2000 to include a Leader and up to ten Members. The Council had adopted the practice in January 2001.

Several meetings had included over forty agenda items:

- 19-03-09 – 52
- 14-01-10 – 41
- 04-02-10 – 41
- 18-03-10 – 41
- 22-07-10 – 46
- 12-04-12 – 53
- 21-06-12 – 42

In this time the Leader of the Council had changed four times: Councillor Steve Foulkes (to 2010), Councillor Jeff Green (to 2011), Councillor Phil Davies (to 2019) and then Councillor Pat Hackett.

Since 4 January 2001, there had been:

- 330 Cabinet meetings;
- fifty different Councillors had sat on the Cabinet in that time, chaired by four different Leaders, Councillor Pat Hackett being the fourth;
- 930 Cabinet Member decisions had been taken; and
- there had been a coalition Cabinet during this time with 5 Labour, 3 Conservative and 2 Liberal Democrat Members.

Councillor Hackett thanked all the officers, past and present, for their contributions to the civic life of Wirral over the 19 years of this system of governance which had seen many challenges and changes. He informed that one constant was that in that time, Cabinet Members had tried to perform to the best of their ability for the residents of the borough they represented.

103 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Stuart Whittingham declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 - Cradle to Career Programme by virtue of the Headteacher at the school where he was a Governor being involved with the programme.

Councillors Tony Jones and Tom Usher declared personal and prejudicial interests in Agenda Items 13 & 15 – Lease for New Offices in Birkenhead Commercial District and its exempt appendix by virtue of them being Board Members of the Wirral Growth Company.

104 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 17 and 24 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

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

RESOLVED:

That the following Key Decisions taken under delegated authority for the period 21 February 2020 to the date of publication of the Cabinet agenda be noted as follows:

Proposed Approval of Updated Highway Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Communications Plan

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services
Date of decision: 21 February 2020

Effective from: 29 February 2020.

Proposed Extension to Existing Highway Contracts

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date of decision: 21 February 2020

Effective from: 29 February 2020.

Acceptance of Tender and Award of Contract – A554 Tower Road, Birkenhead

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Date of decision: 24 February 2020

Effective from: 3 March 2020.

Arboriculture Services – Approval of Contract Strategy and Procurement Route

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date of decision: 28 February 2020

Effective from: 7 March 2020.

Grassroot Football Development in Wirral

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date of decision: 5 March 2020

Effective from: 13 March 2020.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

Decision Maker: Leader of the Council

Date of decision: 24 March 2020

Effective from: 1 April 2020.

Town Centre / High Street Funds – Birkenhead and New Ferry Future High Street Fund

Decision Maker: Leader of the Council

Date of decision: 24 March 2020

Effective from: 1 April 2020.

Coronavirus Contingency Planning

Decision Maker: Leader of the Council

Date of decision: 24 March 2020

Effective from: 1 April 2020.

Highway Structural Maintenance Programme 2020/21 – Funding Allocations and Detailed Programme for Classified Roads

Decision Maker: Leader of the Council
Date of decision: 24 March 2020
Effective from: 1 April 2020.

Birkenhead Market

Decision Maker: Leader of the Council
Date of decision: 24 March 2020
Effective from: 1 April 2020.

Amendments to Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning
Date of decision: 27 April 2020
Effective from: 5 May 2020.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Plan Programme 2020/21

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change
Date of decision: 26 June 2020
Effective from: 4 July 2020.

Highway Structural Maintenance Programme 2020/21 – Local (Unclassified) Roads Programme

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services
Date of decision: 3 July 2020
Effective from: 11 July 2020.

Reintroduction of Car Parking Charges Options

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Community Services
Date of decision: 9 July 2020
Effective from: unknown – item called-in.

Pooled Fund Arrangements 2020/21

Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing
Date of decision: 15 July 2020
Effective from: 23 July 2020 (subject to call-in).

106 **OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT**

Councillor Chris Jones thanked the Director of Public Health and the whole Public Health Team for the fantastic work they had undertaken during the Coronavirus Crisis.

Councillor Jones introduced a report by the Director of Public Health recommending to the Cabinet the local structure and governance of Outbreak Management for all outbreaks, but specifically in relation to COVID-19.

The Director informed the Cabinet that HM Government has asked Local Authorities and Directors of Public Health to undertake several actions as part of an outbreak management framework. This includes the establishment of a local Outbreak Management Plan, Outbreak Management Board and Health Protection Board.

The Cabinet noted that it was the intention of the Government that cross-party and cross-sector working would be strongly encouraged, and all tiers of government were intended to be engaged in a joint endeavour to contain the virus, including Local Resilience Forums, NHS Integrated Care Systems and Mayoral Combined Authorities. Councils were to be free to work at wider geographic levels if they so wished.

It was also noted that the Council would partner and attend regional outbreak management groups/boards across Merseyside and Cheshire, and support the arrangements across Wirral, it had been recommended that a local Outbreak Management Board and Health Protection Board be initiated.

Directors of Public Health working with Public Health England's local health protection teams building on existing health protection plans would put in place measures to identify and contain outbreaks and protect the public's health.

The Director's report set out her responsibilities and the support available to her, provided details on outbreak management, the Outbreak Management Board and on contract tracing.

The Director reported that decisions on steps to be taken by the Council in respect of local incidences were executive decisions (prior to the Council's Annual Meeting). These decisions were likely to be taken in urgent response to advice from her and information provided by the test and trace service, Health Protection Board and NHS linkages.

The Cabinet was informed that Local authorities across England had been allocated a share of £300 million to support the new Test and Trace Service. The funding was intended to help local communities develop and action plans to reduce the spread of coronavirus in their area. The Council had received its share of the funding - £2,733,018 in June 2020.

As there was a risk that the cost of implementing the local and regional infrastructure for outbreak management may exceed the budgeted amount allocated, a governance process had been put in place to oversee the spend of the Test and Trace Funding. The Outbreak Management Board had regular oversight of how the fund was allocated. The Chief Executive and Chief Internal Auditor had regular oversight of how the fund was administered to ensure the grant conditions were met.

Attached to the Director of Public Health' report was:

- Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference for Outbreak Management Board and Health Protection Board;
- Appendix 2 – Outbreak Management Governance Structure Chart; and
- Appendix 3 – Outbreak Management Plan.

Councillor Janette Williamson put on record her thanks to Councillor Chris Jones, the Director of Public Health and her team of officers for the excellent work that they had undertaken during the pandemic.

Councillor Pat Hackett thanked Councillor Chris Jones for the detailed and vital report in respect of the health of people in the borough.

RESOLVED:

That the terms of reference of the Health Protection Board and Outbreak Management Board detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, along with related governance structure summarised in Appendix 2 of the report be agreed.

107 **REVENUE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2020/21**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report by the Senior Finance Manager which summarised the projected year-end revenue position as at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2020) of the 2020/21 financial year, including:

- the financial risk profile presented by the COVID-19 pandemic
- a review of pressures and savings contained within the original budget position and
- an update to the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Cabinet was informed that the year-end forecast recorded as part of the June 2020 financial monitoring activity represented an adverse variance to revenue budget of £30.432m; this comprised:

- £23.987m forecast variance in relation to revenue budget overspends (including a forecast increase to in-year, earmarked reserves of £0.546m),

the adverse position has arisen largely due to matters arising through the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- £2.150m forecast capital receipts, which supported the revenue budget position via flexible use of capital receipts; and
- A £4.296m gap in direct COVID-19 funding against forecast requirements.

It was reported that additional financial support had recently been announced by the Government, including:

- £500m of funding to cover national local authority spending pressures (tranche 3); and
- a co-payment mechanism for irrecoverable sales, fees and charges income, with the Government due to cover 75% of losses beyond 5% of planned income and designed to mitigate the sales and fees income losses for Local Authorities.

The Cabinet noted that this funding would mitigate, in part, the budget gap, however, the details relating to the implementation of the additional financial support were unknown, which meant the impact on the Council's position was yet to be determined.

The Cabinet also noted that some savings had been identified through building closures (£0.4m) and the suspension of events (£0.413m). Many buildings had been re-purposed for COVID-19 activity, and most others were still incurring the fixed costs associated with longstanding assets (such as rates, rents, insurance), the savings were primarily from reduced utilities costs.

The Cabinet was aware that the Council's financial position remained challenging with much uncertainty given the recent announcement of further funding and a forthcoming Spending Round. The financial position was fluid and developing with the Government having stated its continuing support to the sector. The Council continued to limit spending to essential areas of service delivery only and Corporate Directors were supported to mitigate the risk of overspending.

Councillor Williamson made reference to the fact that this was the last Cabinet meeting and in her role as Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources paid tribute to the Director of Finance and her Team who she had worked with for the last three years. She thanked all the officers and informed that through their efforts the Council had been on a stable footing and had delivered some progressive initiatives within Finance. Councillor Williamson stated that it was unfortunate that the Council was now in the financial position it was in but Members understood that residents' health came first and that was what the Council had tried to address during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

This was the first time she had reported the risk of issuing a section 114 notice but considered it was prudent to highlight this at this time and reflect on the seriousness of the position the Council found itself in. The section 114 notice would not ordinarily be initiated in circumstances such as the Pandemic. It was a one-off and could not have been predicted. The situation the Council was in was unique and not down to financial mismanagement. Virtually every Council in the country was in the same position.

Councillor Tom Usher informed that it was extremely disappointing financial position to be in. The Council had been given a guarantee that Government funding would be available to deal with and respond to Covid-19 properly and that had not materialised.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Cabinet notes the year-end forecast position at Quarter 1 of £30.432m as adverse;
- (2) the Cabinet notes the risks posed to delivering on the savings proposals within the 2020-21 budget;
- (3) the Cabinet notes the impact of funding and expenditure as a direct consequence of COVID-19; and
- (4) the Cabinet notes the revisions to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020-2025.

108 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2020/21**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report of the Senior Finance Business Partner which provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme 2020/21 at the end of June 2020. It recommended that the Cabinet agreed the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £131.7 million which took account of re-profiling, additional funding requirements and grant variations identified since the Capital Programme was formally agreed on 2 March 2020.

The Cabinet considered the following background information:

- The Capital Programme 2020/21 Position by Directorate
- Re-profiling of Expenditure from 2019/20
- Grant Funded Schemes
- Recommendations to Council: Approval for Funding
- Capital Funding Requirements

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

RESOLVED: That

(1) **the Cabinet recommends to the Council the approval of additional funding for the schemes referred to in paragraph 3.3. of the report and as follows:**

- **Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1,150,000** of allocated to Wirral Council by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to support the delivery of the Combined Authority Transport Plan Programme in 2020/21. The programme is a package of schemes designed to support increased numbers of journeys to be undertaken by sustainable active modes reducing resident's reliance on the private car and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Highways Maintenance Funding - £2,149,000** of allocated to Wirral Council by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to support maintenance of the network in 2020/21. The programme of investment in our highway assets will support improvements to roads/footways/bridges and lighting.
- **Disabled Facility Grant - £4.163,000** allocated to Wirral Council by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide grants for people with a permanent disability of any sort – including physical and learning disabilities, sensory impairments and mental illness. The grants are to help towards making changes or adaptations to a home to allow the person to continue living there.

(2) **the Cabinet recommends to the Council the approval of the revised Capital Programme of £131.7 million for 2020-21.**

109 **FINANCIAL MONITORING OUTTURN 2019-20**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report by the Director of Resources that outlined how the Council had managed its resources to provide value for money services during 2019-20. The report included a Revenue Outturn summary and service area performance against budget. It also summarised the key headlines for Revenue, Capital and Collections and concluded the reporting to the Cabinet for the 2019-20 financial year.

Further details to support the content of the report were provided in the appendices to the report as follows:

- Appendix 1 Revenue Outturn 2019-20
- Appendix 2 Capital Outturn 2019-20
- Appendix 3 Collection Summary Outturn 2019-20

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

RESOLVED: That

(1) Revenue

- (a) it be noted that the gross expenditure has been balanced to gross income with the appropriate allocation of reserves;**
- (b) it be noted that the General Fund Balance at 31 March 2020 of £10.668 million; and**
- (c) it be noted that the Earmarked Reserves totalling £66.768 million.**

(2) Capital

- (a) the additional re-profiling of £19.4 million from 2019/20 to 2020/21 be noted;**
- (b) the financing of the Programme for 2019/20 be noted; and**
- (c) the Programme for 2020/21 and beyond be kept under review to ensure it is realistic, deliverable and affordable.**

3 Collection Summary

- (a) it be note that the in-year collection rate for Council Tax is 94.8%, the same as the previous year;**
- (b) the increase in cash collected for Council Tax 2019/20 of £11.7 million be noted; and**
- (c) the in-year collection rate for Business Rates of 97.53% (In 2018/19 the collection rate was 97.9%.) be noted;**
- (d) the £86.557 million of Sundry Debtors collected in the year be noted; and**
- (e) the sundry debts for Adults Social Services and Other Directorates detailed in the report to be written-off against the Provision for Bad Debts of £2.271 million be approved.**

110 WIRRAL TREE, WOODLAND AND HEDGEROW STRATEGY

Councillor Elizabeth Grey introduced a report by the Lead Commissioner – Environment Wirral which informed that the Council had developed the Wirral Tree

Strategy (WTS) in partnership with Wirral Initiative for Trees (WiT) and a range of other key stakeholders. This ambitious strategy focused on tree protection, maintenance and planting and sought to dramatically increase Wirral's Urban Forest (including the green infrastructure of parks, gardens, woods, trees in streets, footpaths, green spaces, trees and hedges) as a means of carbon capture. It was anticipated that WTS would also support the development of a National Tree Strategy.

The Wirral Tree Strategy (WTS), including an Executive Summary, was attached to the report as Appendix 1.

Councillor Grey informed that over the next ten years, the Council and its partners would:

- establish a clear picture of Wirral's tree stock and its benefits;
- plant over 200,000 trees (at least 21,000 per year, net of loss incurred through Ash Dieback) such that Wirral's tree canopy cover would be doubled once those trees were fully grown;
- replace every felled tree with multiple new trees;
- ensure that all new and replacement trees were planted under the principle of 'right tree for the right place';
- ensure that all decisions and activities undertaken in relation to trees were made in a structured and consistent way; and
- work constructively with individuals and groups across Wirral to deliver this ambitious vision and action.

The Cabinet was informed that in pursuit of this vision, the WTS would provide a mechanism for:

- improving the provision and care of trees, woodlands and hedgerows;
- formulating a focused action plan for the 2020-2030 period and beyond; and
- monitoring the action plan(s) and policies for the care, management and enhancement of Wirral's trees, woodlands, and hedgerows.

Councillor Grey informed that whilst the WTS was a ten-year strategy which covered the period of 2020-2030, it was also an ongoing framework for thinking about trees, woodlands, and hedgerows across the Borough of Wirral. The WTS was intended to be a living document, which would grow, change, and develop to meet future challenges in implementing the strategy, and, as such, would be regularly revised and extended over the next 50 years.

The Cabinet noted that the Council could continue operations without adopting a tree strategy. However, this course of action would be problematic in several respects.

Firstly, the Council would have no strategy in place to guide the process of replacing the trees which had been recently felled across the borough as part of the tree management regime. Not only would this course of action allow Wirral's tree stocks to be depleted at a time when their benefits were vital in response to the climate emergency, it would contrast sharply with the commitments to replace such trees that the Council had made to residents, partners and stakeholders. If the Council were to fulfil its commitments to residents, partners, and stakeholders, as well as responding adequately to the practical reality of the climate emergency, it needed the WTS to provide strategic direction in its management and expansion of tree stock.

Secondly, the Council was committed to significantly increasing tree stocks across Wirral and the WTS presented a coherent vision for how this could be achieved. Without such a strategy, the Council risked investing valuable resources into a project in an inefficient, uncoordinated, and ad hoc manner.

Thirdly, the WTS pulls together, co-ordinates and supplements many aspects of the Council's central objectives, as laid out in the Local Plan and Climate Emergency Action Plan. Not only does the WTS provide added value to these existing objectives, it provides an additional mechanism for ensuring we are maximising the outcomes for our residents, partners, and stakeholders.

This was a key decision and affected all Wards in the borough.

Appended to the report were:

- Appendix 1 – Wirral Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy; and
- Appendix 2 – Consultation Summary Report

Councillor Grey informed that Wirral's Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy had grown from a tremendous amount of hard work and collaboration between the Council and Wirral Initiative on Trees. This collaborative approach with local experts advising throughout had been commended at the highest levels. Both DEFRA and the Tree Council had praised the work done and Friends of the Earth had described the Strategy as visionary.

Councillor Grey reported that the Strategy represented a key aspect of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and, over the next ten years, it would aim to double its tree cover by planting over 21,000 trees a year and by replacing any trees felled with multiple new trees. Depending on the size of the tree felled, it would be replaced by up to eight new trees or more on occasion. The Council would also promote natural regeneration wherever possible which fitted with the Council's overarching ambitions to restore eco-systems and work with nature. This vital part of the Council's climate emergency response would see it work with individuals and groups across Wirral to support the Council's ambition to be

carbon neutral by 2030 by providing carbon storage as well as promoting and protecting natural habitats and biodiversity.

Councillor Grey was delighted that Wirral was leading the way and being recognised as such with this Strategy she informed the Cabinet that she was really disappointed that the Government had failed to emulate the Council's high standards with its own Tree Strategy.

Councillor Grey made reference to the England Tree Strategy which was now out to public consultation and urged everyone to take part and request that, like Wirral, the Government pledged to at least double tree cover which it had sadly failed to do. She also urged people to request the Government to adequately fund councils like Wirral that were taking the climate emergency seriously and had pledged to plant hundreds of thousands of trees.

Councillor Pat Hackett thanked Councillor Grey for her detailed report and praised the best practice that the Council had adopted by putting the Strategy in place. The Council was now leading the way locally and nationally.

Councillor Janette Williamson echoed Councillor Hackett's sentiments and thanked Councillor Grey for all her hard work on the Strategy which meant that the Council was now leading the way.

Councillor Anita Leech thanked Councillor Grey, the officers and the interest groups who had helped draw up the Strategy which would now inform the Local Plan. The Strategy would be taken into consideration as part of any pre-planning applications that came forward.

Councillor Tom Usher informed that Wirral people wanted a greener borough and potentially some of these trees could be urban trees. This was good for mental health and pride in local areas.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the recommendations of the scrutiny panel's review of the Wirral Tree Strategy be noted and endorsed:**
- (2) the Wirral Tree Strategy be noted and approved;**
- (3) the creation of an advisory board made up of Council representatives and partners to monitor progress against the Strategy's objectives and action plan be approved;**
- (4) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to develop the action plan to fully implement the Strategy; and**
- (5) it be noted that the Tree Strategy can be a material consideration in planning applications and, therefore, a matter that will be considered in**

delegated officer decision making and decisions of the Planning Committee.

111 ENFORCEMENT POLICY 2020

Councillor Elizabeth Grey introduced a report by the Assistant Director – Safer Wirral Service which sought the approval of the updated Wirral Council Enforcement Policy. The Cabinet was informed that the Council's previous Enforcement Policy had last been amended in 2016 and, therefore, in line with good governance and subsequent changes in the Council's approach to enforcement, it must now be updated.

The Cabinet noted that the Policy provided guidance to officers, businesses, and the public on the range of options that were available to achieve compliance with legislation enforced by the Council's various regulatory services. It was designed to help officers; businesses and the public understand the Council's objectives and methods for achieving compliance and the criteria it considered when deciding the most appropriate response to a breach of legislation.

It was reported that the key changes to the policy document included the removal of references to a robust approach to litter and dog fouling by authorised third parties. Other changes had expanded the scope of the policy to include safety within sports grounds which had previously been absent. Minor formatting issues and phrasing had also been reviewed.

The Cabinet was informed that not updating the Policy could be considered as an option. However, for the purposes of good governance, best practice and to reflect the changes in the approach to litter and dog fouling by authorised third parties the policy had been reviewed and where required, updated.

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

Appended to the report at Appendix 1 was the Wirral Council Enforcement Policy 2020.

Councillor Grey informed that the new Enforcement Policy met all the statutory requirements of the Regulator's Code. The Policy explained how the Council would respond to non-compliance in a way that was transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and risk based. The Policy covered a broad range of regulatory services, its scope took in multiple areas including housing, environmental Health, Trading Standards, Planning Enforcement, Building Control, Waste and Environment, Licencing and Safety of Sports Grounds. It was an overarching policy and each separate service area would have specific technical policies which refer to it.

Councillor Grey also informed that the Policy removed some of the more contentious elements contained in the previous version concerning the use of

external contractors using the zero-tolerance approach especially in Waste and Environment. The Policy was now more about graduated enforcement and should be non-confrontational. However, it was robust, and officers had open to them all enforcement powers legally available should the situation require this. The Policy allowed both fairness and effectiveness in dealing with non-compliance and enforcement. It would help businesses and individuals to understand the Council's objectives and methods of achieving compliance and the criteria used when deciding the most appropriate response when responding to a breach of legislation.

Councillor Pat Hackett reported that he was pleased that there was going to be zero tolerance and recognised the need to be robust in the way that the Council carried out enforcement. He drew attention to the increase in fly tipping in the borough during lockdown and informed that this was overdue and needed.

Councillor Tony Jones commented that this was a most welcome change of tack and essential to the health and wellbeing of the borough. He paid tribute to the work that Councillor Grey and the officers had carried out in respect of this new Enforcement Policy which he fully endorsed.

RESOLVED:

That the updated Wirral Council Enforcement Policy at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

112 **CRADLE TO CAREER PROGRAMME**

Councillor Tom Usher introduced a report by the Assistant Director: Early Help and Prevention which provided an overview of the Cradle to Career programme which was a collaboration between the Council, the education charities Right to Succeed and SHINE, the Steve Morgan Foundation, North Birkenhead Development Trust and the community of North Birkenhead to develop a place-based approach that would reduce the inequality gap for children and young people by transforming how public services, education providers and residents worked together for collective impact. The report outlined what the programme would deliver and the role of the Council's Children's Services and partners.

Councillor Usher informed that it was a pleasure to present this report to the last Cabinet meeting. He had held his portfolio since May 2019 and during this time some great progress had been made in respect of the quality of children's social services. He appreciated the support and dedication of Cabinet Members, the Director of Child, Family and Education and his Team who had all shown an extraordinary dedication to improving the lives of children and families in the borough. It had been a pleasure for him to work with the Team.

Councillor Usher reported that this project supported the Wirral Plan 2020-25 objectives:

- Working for a prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations.
- Working for safe and pleasant communities where Wirral residents feel safe, and where they want to live and raise their families.
- Working for happy, active, and healthy lives where people are supported, protected, and inspired to live independently; and
- Working for brighter futures for Wirral's children, young people, and families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in the borough.

This matter affected the Bidston St. James Ward and was not a key decision.

Councillor Usher made the point that this project was not short term, it was mid to long term and it was something the Council could fully support when local government was funded. Unfortunately, the Council was under serious financial pressures which had not been helped by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Councillor Usher was disappointed that the Government had praised the Council for its good work and for providing resources for this project, working in a way that really took seriously the poverty and deprivation that occurred in some of its local communities but it had also decided not to cover all of the expenditure the Council had incurred whilst assisting the Government with its response to the Pandemic

The Cabinet was informed that two other options had been considered. The first option had been to not to engage as an active partner of the Cradle to Career Programme but to continue to deliver services to residents in North Birkenhead in the same way as had been done over previous years. This would risk the investment from sponsors being withdrawn and the opportunity for place-based change being lost. The second option had been to provide funding to the programme rather than a dedicated public services team. It was considered in the Council's best interests to provide a staffing resource as professionals and services would gain from the experience, creating opportunity for further roll out of best practice.

Appended to the report were:

- Appendix 1 - North Birkenhead Cradle to Career Executive Summary; and
- Appendix 2 – Cradle to Career Public Services Team.

Councillor Anita Leech considered this to be an excellent initiative that would run for a minimum of three years, tackling the inequalities in the North of Birkenhead area. Hopefully, if successful it could be rolled out further to other similar areas of the borough. Councillor Leech congratulated everyone who was involved with the project.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham welcomed this exciting initiative which he considered had been a long time coming. He referred to the problems, previous Council funding and the deeply engrained inequalities caused because of the declining industries in that part of the borough. Councillor Whittingham confirmed that this totally different approach was required. Councillor Whittingham congratulated Councillor Usher and all parties involved with the project and wished them every success.

Councillor Pat Hackett also offered his congratulations to Councillor Usher and the officers involved with the project that would make a big difference to people living in this area of the borough by bringing in significant financial investments and providing extra support and education opportunities for children, young people and families in North Birkenhead. Councillor Hackett also drew attention to the Wirral Waters Project and the significant development that would take place in this area along with the skills that would be needed.

Councillor Elizabeth Grey congratulated Councillor Usher and the officers involved with the project. She represented that area of the borough concerned and informed that the people who lived there had such energy and potential which had not been enabled previously. This initiative was so well deserved for these communities. Councillor Grey was excited about the project and looked forward to developments over time.

Councillor Usher thanked Members for their comments and reported that the Council's job was to remove the barriers that prevented success for the people in that community. The people's energy and brilliance were a vital part of the approach. The Council was building this project with the community, it was no longer about hard to reach communities. Some of the residents had pointed out that some of the services the Council had on offer were hard to access and it needed to get down there and work with that community to do what it could to reduce those social and health inequalities.

RESOLVED:

That the Cradle to Career partnership be supported and the three-year commitment to providing a dedicated public services team be endorsed.

113 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report by the Senior Finance Business Partner – Treasury Management which informed that the Council's treasury management activity was underpinned by the CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management ("the Code"), which required the Council to approve treasury management semi-annual and annual reports.

The Cabinet noted that the report fulfilled the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Investment Guidance.

It was reported that proactive Treasury Management activity had resulted in savings of £0.9 million. These savings were on top of the £2 million worth of Treasury Management savings already built into the 2019/20 budget. The additional savings resulted due to a combination of increased investment income and securing lower cost loans.

The level of Capital Financing debt, including the Merseyside Residuary Body debt managed by the Council on behalf of the constituent authorities, was £173 million at 31 March 2020. The Cabinet noted that this was a reduction of £91 million since 1 April 2012 and reflected policies to minimise and delay borrowing costs which adversely impact upon the revenue budget.

The Council had complied with the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators as set out in the agreed Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20.

This matter affected all the Wards within the Borough and the decisions in the report were key decisions.

Appended to the report at Appendix 1 was the Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2019/20.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 2019/20 Treasury Management Annual Report be agreed and recommended to the Council for approval at its meeting in October 2020; and
- (2) the saving of an additional £0.9 million above the budgeted savings target from treasury and capital financing activities in 2019/20 be noted.

114 CONSIDERATION OF GAINING REAL LIVING WAGE ACCREDITATION

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report by the Head of Procurement that summarised the work being undertaken to explore gaining accreditation with the Real Living Wage Foundation.

The Cabinet noted that this initiative supported all five components of the Wirral Plan as the Council's contracts supported all services:

- Safe and Pleasant Communities

- Sustainable Environment
- Active and Healthy Lives
- Brighter Futures
- Inclusive Economy

The Cabinet was informed that the requirement to provide the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage was a statutory requirement and thus was already included in the Council's contracts.

The Living Wage Foundation was an independent organisation that recognised the leadership of responsible employers who choose to pay a real Living Wage based on the cost of living, not just the government minimum.

Councillor Williamson reported that there were three key reasons why it mattered to pay the Real Living Wage:

- Safeguarding workers from in-work poverty: It was only through accreditation that local authorities could ensure that all the money they spend was being used to pay people the Real Living Wage.
- Investing in the local economy: The cumulative impact of local authorities paying the Real Living Wage. When workers earned enough to live, they had more income to spend in the local economy.
- Demonstrating Civic Leadership: Strong and visible leadership was important to the growth of the Real Living Wage and there was a huge opportunity for local authorities to play an even greater role, beyond their own workers, in tackling in-work poverty in their communities.

Councillor Williamson informed that through accreditation, a number of local authorities were making a commitment to tackle in-work poverty in their communities. They were ensuring that all staff were paid at least the living wage and that the independently calculated rates were implemented each year to keep up with the cost of living. As well as directly employed staff the accreditator's must also ensure that all third party regularly contracting staff received the real living wage.

Councillor Williamson reported that the Council must give employees dignity, respect and enough income so that they could have a good quality of life. This was the bare minimum that the Council owed to its residents and its workforce. Inequality was at the very heart of what the Council had to tackle going forward. It had to look at and reduce inequalities of income, health and wellbeing. This was a great step forward. Councillor Williamson was pleased that she could end her tenure as a Cabinet Member on this optimistic note. She was confident that this would move forward and the Council would be accredited soon.

Councillor Anita Leech welcomed the detailed report. She informed that the Covid-19 Crisis had made people realise that they were very dependent on people who were paid a low wage and so was pleased about the discussions being held about this. People who had been helping to save lives were struggling with food and fuel poverty.

Councillor Chris Jones thanked Councillor Williamson for the work she had put in on this. She knew what a difference the extra money had meant to many care workers during this crisis. These people had put themselves at risk every time they went to work, as well as the cleaners and everybody else.

Councillor Pat Hackett reported that the Council was leading the way on this with others following. The Council was the only one in the Liverpool City Region to do this and Members should be proud that they were putting money into the pockets of workers on the frontline, taking risks on the Council's behalf. Councillor Hackett thanked Councillor Williamson for leading on this and for leading on the Community Wealth initiative and the Community Bank. All of this would make a difference to the lives of local people and local businesses.

Councillor Tom Usher informed that he worked with autistic adults for eight years and during the lockdown his organisation had been working extremely hard to make sure everyone of the service users was safe. There had not been a single confirmed case of Coronavirus. The dedication and responsibility people take on for a very low wage dealing with the most sensitive and important aspects of people's lives. Seeking to gain accreditation was a fantastic step and Councillor Usher fully supported the initiative.

Councillor Usher declared a personal interest in this item of business by virtue of his work with Autism Together.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham also thanked Councillor Williamson for leading on this initiative. He reported that it was benefiting everyone as the extra money received would be spent in the local economy because of the multiplier effect.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the activity undertaken so far in working towards gaining accreditation to the Real Living Wage Foundation and the next steps and further analysis to be undertaken be noted;**
- (2) a further report be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee that recommends seeking accreditation from the RLW Foundation if the further work undertaken confirms this; and**

- (3) it be noted that approval has already been made to the Care Sector under the Covid-19 response for providers to be sufficiently funded to pay their employees who are engaged on Wirral Council contracts the Real Living Wage.

115 **BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO THE NEW FERRY EXPLOSION**

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced a report on the New Ferry Explosion Scrutiny Review carried out by a cross party panel set up by the Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee, consisting of Councillors Dave Mitchell, Jo Bird, Steve Hayes, and Mike Collins. The agreed outcomes were:

- to ensure that all necessary steps had been taken to address those residents, traders and other people affected by the incident; and
- to consider what improvements could be made by the Council and partner organisation in their response to future disasters.

The review had been carried out during November and December 2019 when there had been several interviews and stakeholder sessions held. The full report, recommendations and scoping document were attached as appendices to the report.

The eight recommendations were as follows:

“

1. The Council should focus on putting people directly affected first. For example, making hardship payments to victims as soon as the scale of a disaster and needs of the victims has been fully identified. In certain urgent circumstances, the Local Authority should consider making these payments without the approval of full Council. Bespoke support should also be included, through the NHS, housing services and Victim Support or other advocacy providers.
2. The Panel notes that some residents and traders felt they didn't know who to turn to. Contacts numbers for the public to use should be coordinated, up to date and available for the public to use immediately, via a centralized 0800 number. This should be publicised online and through the media as well as in paper copies. Translators and British Sign Language should be made available for those who need them. Social media to be used to convey information and updates and special information channels to be created such as text messaging. Key numbers such as victims, injuries and

property damage should be put out by communications to avoid any media under reporting.

3. Any future incidents that involve significant damage to a site or area, the local authority should ensure that the site is 'made good' and landscaped once they are able to access it legally. This could be through grassing, hoardings or involving the local community with murals. Where possible the area should be screened to reduce the visual impact of the site on the community. The council should also actively attempt to improve the sites before we have legal access to the properties. Once the site is available for regeneration, the wider community should be consulted as much as possible to include their ideas and should be delivered.
4. There should be pro-active support for traders, as stated in the All Hazards Emergency Plan. More communication, promotion and marketing with council support. Open for business signs should be installed as soon as the area is secure. National government should be approached and requested to make payments for loss of trade to businesses consistent with other places affected by disasters such as Salisbury and Whalley Bridge.
5. The authority should delay billing until insurance companies are taking claims and/or ensure that bills go with a sensitive cover letter to explain who to contact and advice on payment. Vulnerable victims should not be threatened with legal action by the Council as the impact can be particularly damaging to mental health. Proper organised advice should be given to victims regarding recovery via legal means (their own solicitor, CAB) and single point of contact should be utilised. If the site is classified as a crime scene bills should be held back until after court proceedings have concluded.
6. Ensure that the emergency response file is updated on a regular basis and seeks feedback from people directly affected by incidents so that all points are covered. and reported to the relevant committee on an annual basis (to include updates on all significant incidents that have occurred that year such as flooding). The Council's All Hazards Emergency Plan was last updated in 2011 and then 2018. Officer should also ensure that all hazards recovery plan is regularly reviewed and after incidents. Formal lines of communication should be kept open between officers and all councillors. Every Councillor should have a contact number for emergency situations, with council wide briefings sent to all members.

7. Bellwin Scheme to be applied for in the first instance as per its own recommendation;

“It is wise to report the incident even if spending is not likely to exceed the threshold. In the event of a later scheme taking total spending for the year above the threshold, the earlier spending would not be counted towards the threshold unless the relevant incident was reported at the time”.

The Council’s costs were £573,778, after hardship payments were made to all victims in August 2019. The panel noted that this was more than enough to have met the Bellwin threshold for government reimbursement. Applying for the Bellwin scheme in a major incident within the given deadline also emphasizes the seriousness of the incident. It is then up to the National Government Authority to determine what resources can then be provided.

8. A major incident should be called early on, even if another agency has already declared one. This can always be stepped down, however in accordance with the Council’s All Hazard’s Emergency Plan, an off-site gold command meeting should have been called and minutes should also be taken at all meeting and made available to the public. The chief executive or their nominee should be directly involved in the recovery and gold command meeting, in accordance with the All Hazards Emergency Plan. They should also visit the site and listen to the community. Briefings should also be sent to all elected members to ensure they are kept up to date with the event as it unfolds.”

The report had been considered by the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2020 (Minute No. 41 refers.) The Committee had resolved to support the contents and recommendations of the scrutiny review ‘New Ferry Explosion’ and had referred the report to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting for consideration of the recommendations made.

Councillor Hackett reported that the explosion in New Ferry on 25 March 2017 that had a devastating effect on people’s lives and businesses. Over 40 businesses had reported damage; 15 of these had reported serious damages and eight had been forced to cease trading with immediate effect; 32 households suffered significant damage with 68 people being displaced in temporary accommodation. Cabinet Members would never forget the events of that evening.

Councillor Hackett informed that following the explosion, the Council had undertaken, in consultation with the local community, a New Ferry Regeneration Delivery Plan. One of the key elements of the Plan was to remove derelict properties from the New Ferry Centre while at the same time creating development opportunities for new residential units to help to re-populate the town centre.

Over the past three years, the Council had progressed several innovative projects to regenerate the area and rebuild the community.

The Council was supporting New Ferry Rangers Football Club in developing the Community Clubhouse in an innovative approach to utilising the site, making it work smarter for all the local community. The Community Clubhouse project sat very comfortably alongside the Council's aspirations for community wealth building. The project clearly hit several of the concept's core principles; not least 'Plural ownership of the economy' and 'Socially just use of land and property'.

Using £500k of funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Council had acquired 78-80 New Chester Road former Shillings Pub on behalf of New Ferry Community Land Trust (CLT), with a view towards its refurbishment, to enable it to be brought back into economic use. Essentially a mixed-use scheme, first floor residential with ground floor retail. The income from this would be regenerated into New Ferry for the greater good of the area. The project would provide some financial support to CLT to strengthen its governance and to enable capacity building and future income generating activity.

As part of the New Ferry Masterplan, the Council had submitted three outline planning applications for the three key development sites in New Ferry; explosion site, cleared site opposite on Bebington Road, and Woodhead Street car park. These were currently with Development Control for determination and it was anticipated that decisions on these would be known shortly.

Works to improve the physical appearance of the precinct in Bebington Road would commence shortly. The Council would be appointing contractors to excavate the site of the explosion (41-43 Bebington Road) by removing the concrete slab, levelling the land before applying a crush and run type finish. Once completed this area could be used by the community for a variety of worthwhile/pop up uses until firmer plans for its redevelopment were proposed. Following this Griffiths' butchers would be demolished to create a larger development site opposite, which in the short term could be used to create a community garden. Tenders for the demolition works had been received last month.

Councillor Hackett reported that a comprehensive funding bid had been submitted to the Government's Future High Street Fund in June 2020 and a decision was expected in October 2020. Cabinet Members were hopeful of securing the funding required to accelerate the regenerate the New Ferry area. The Metro Mayor funding was being used to secure sustainable long-term premises for the New Ferry Community Land Trust. New Ferry was one of the Councils priority regeneration projects as agreed earlier in the year.

Finally, Councillor Hackett reported that the Cabinet had considered the contents of the report and the recommendations made and was happy to accept some of the recommendations with a few observations where the recommendations could not be fully agreed.

Councillor Anita Leech thanked the Scrutiny Panel for the work it had carried out. She also thanked the community groups, the Local Ward Members, the officers

concerned and the artists who had been involved with the artistic impressions that could now be seen in Rock Ferry. Councillor Leech reported that this had been a very difficult time for the residents and the businesses of that area and that it was fantastic to see that planning applications were now coming through to improve the site for the local people.

Councillor Janette Williamson concurred with Councillor Leech. Councillor Williamson, who had been affected by the blast, informed that she was now looking forward to the improvements to be carried out in her local area. She informed that the murals were amazing and that they made such a difference. In the longer term, with the regeneration plans now in place, she was hoping that New Ferry would grow and prosper.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Panel's recommendations 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 as detailed above be agreed;**
- (2) it be noted that recommendations 3, 5 and 8 are beyond the Cabinet's control;**
- (3) in respect of the Panel's recommendation 3, the Cabinet's response be as follows:**

"This recommendation can be accepted where this is agreed with the land or property owner before the Council has legal access or on safety grounds."
- (4) in respect of recommendation 5, the Cabinet's response be as follows:**

"This can be agreed only in relation to the following item 'Proper organised advice should be given to victims regarding recovery via legal means (their own solicitor, CAB) and single point of contact should be utilised.'"

The Cabinet is unable to agree to delaying billing as the Council has a statutory requirement to invoice for expenditure within the year it has been incurred. Therefore, a delay in sending out bills to customers where it has incurred expenditure on their behalf is not possible.

However, the Cabinet agrees that vulnerable victims should not be threatened with legal action in such circumstances where insurance companies are taking claims and can agree to place a hold on the recovery of these invoices until this has been resolved."
- (5) in respect of recommendation 8, the Cabinet's response be as follows:**

"This can be agreed where the Council has control of Gold Command for future incidents and the incident fits the criteria for declaring a major incident. Where the Council does not have Gold Command, it

may request that a major incident is called but is not in overall control as to whether this will be granted.”

- (6) the Cabinet thanks the Scrutiny Review Panel for the work it has undertaken on the review. The Cabinet is pleased that a way forward has been agreed that is satisfactory to all interested parties so that the Scrutiny into the tragic event on the evening of 25 March 2017 can be concluded.”**

Councillors Tony Jones and Tom Usher left the meeting.

116 LEASE FOR NEW OFFICES IN BIRKENHEAD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced an updated report by the Director of Law and Governance following approval by the Cabinet at its meeting on 24 February 2020 of the Wirral Growth Company LLP Partnership Business Plan. (Minute No. 94 refers.) He informed that the Council’s plans for economic growth were about creating community wealth. They were also about creating jobs and opportunities for local people, regenerating commercial areas and inspiring ambition. Councillor Hackett was of the view that prosperous communities were happier, healthier, and better places in which to live. The proposals set out in the report detailed the next steps for taking forward the strategic regeneration objectives of the Wirral Growth Company for Central Birkenhead.

Councillor Hackett reported that Council officers had been working with the Wirral Growth Company LLP to finalise the location of the proposed new Birkenhead Commercial District. This development was to be underpinned by the Council taking a lease of space anticipated to be approximately 150,000 sq. ft net for a period of approximately 40 years, with a maximum rent payment period of 35 years to enable funding for future re-developments by the Wirral Growth Company LLP.

Whilst the business case for this development was approved by Cabinet at its meeting of 24 February 2020 the report recommended to Members that there should be no significant delay in proceeding with the above lease arrangements, notwithstanding the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report sought authority for the Director of Law and Governance to negotiate and finalise the terms of the lease structure in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place and enter into a conditional agreement for the lease and such other documentation as may be reasonably necessary to progress the proposed lease structure. There were also consequential recommendations regarding the appointment of contractors and the amendment of the Milestones for entering into the agreement for lease.

This matter affected all wards within the borough and the decisions were Key Decisions.

In considering other options the Cabinet noted that to not enter into the agreement for lease the Council would be exposed to a claim that it had breached the partnership agreement and this would trigger a potential compensation payment to its Joint Venture Partner. This option was, therefore, not recommended.

Another option was to revisit the means of financing with a view to an outright purchase of the property. This was not recommended as the merits of such an option had been fully considered by the Cabinet in the report of 24 February 2020. Whilst financing a purchase via the Public Works Loan Board had been considered, the Council would be directly funding the preparation and construction costs from day one, placing a liability on the Council. The annuity lease mechanism meant that the forward funder would be funding this. Also, the timing of payments with lower amounts under the annuity lease in the early and mid-term life of the asset meant that the annuity lease was predicted to result in lower cost on a net present value discounted cash flow basis. The Cabinet agreed the recommendations in the report that an annuity lease option would be the better option. It was considered that there had been no significant changes in circumstances requiring the above appraisal to be re-considered.

The Cabinet noted that another option was to arrange for a funder to have the obligation to fit out the offices space. However, whilst this was technically possible, it was considered that no funder would invest because of such an obligation.

Appended to the report were:

- Appendix 1 – Wirral Growth Company Partnership Business Plan (Exempt - Minute No.117 refers.)
- Appendix 2 – Site Plan for the Birkenhead Commercial District Offices
- Appendix 3 – Report on the proposed legal structure
- Appendix 4 – Extracts from report on the proposed legal structure with sensitive information (Exempt Minute No. 117 also refers.)

Councillor Hackett thanked the Director of Regeneration and Place and his Team of officers for their hard work on this project.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham also thanked all the officers involved with this regeneration project, he commented on the fantastic plans the Council had for this area of Birkenhead and was pleased the Council's current governance arrangements were ending on such a positive note.

Councillor Hackett referred to the Council's Local Plan and informed that this regeneration area of the borough would help the Council meet its new housing targets and ensured that it did not have to build on green belt land.

Councillor Anita Leech welcomed the report and was pleased to see this regeneration work taking place in the borough. She considered it to be a real kick-start to the numbers of houses in the Local Plan being built on brown field sites.

Councillor Janette Williamson also welcomed the report and regeneration on this scale, it fitted with the more locally focused community wealth building and she considered that it was absolutely vital as the borough came out of the Coronavirus Crisis that the Council built its community up. She also thanked the Director of Regeneration and Place and his team of officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED:

That the following be approved:

- (1) the appointment of the following consultants on the design and delivery of the new offices, in accordance with the terms of the Wirral Growth Company Partnership Agreement:**
 - (a) Building Contractor- Morgan Sindell**
 - (b) Architect - AHR Architects Limited**
 - (c) Civil and Structural Engineer- Curtins Consulting Limited**
 - (d) Fire Engineer - Design Fire Consultants Limited**
 - (e) M&E Engineer, BREEAM and Acoustics- Hannan Associates Limited**
 - (f) Contract Administrator- Walker Sime Limited**
 - (g) Quantity Surveyor- Abacus Cost Management Limited**
 - (h) Health and Safety Auditor - Walker Sime Limited**
 - (i) Landscape Architect – Gillespies LLP**
 - (j) Ecology – United Environmental Services Limited**
 - (k) Highways - Vectos**
 - (l) Rights of light and Party Wall -GIA**
 - (m) Planning - Barton Willmore Planning Limited**

- (2) the granting of authority to the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place to:**
 - (a) negotiate and agree and finalise the terms of a lease of the land shown edged red on the plan attached at Appendix 2 to Wirral Growth Company LLP or such funder as may be appointed by Wirral Growth Company LLP together with a lease back to the Council of the land and/or the completed office development (of approximately 150,000 sq. ft) within the following parameters:**
 - (i) the land acquired or to be acquired at Milton Pavements shall be added to the Option Agreement with the Wirral Growth**

Company LLP on the basis that the Wirral Growth Company LLP may not acquire it at less than the amount the Council pays for it and on the basis of the existing option agreement conditions, with such specific changes as may be needed to accommodate the proposed structure of the annuity lease;

(ii) the lease back to the Council from the Wirral Growth Company LLP or the funder shall be at no more than the rent per square foot set out in the approved Partnership Business Plan as set out in the exempt Appendix 1 to this report; and

(iii) the conditions that apply to the option agreement currently shall apply to the sale and leaseback arrangement so that the viability tests and planning tests and other tests that apply to the working arrangements of the Wirral Growth Company LLP apply to the annuity lease structure.

(2) negotiate and agree and finalise amendment of the Milestones in the Partnership Agreement and the Partnership Business Plan to reflect the revised timescales for the entering into of the agreement for lease as follows:

‘agreement for lease to be entered into by 30 June 2020 albeit the parties have informally agreed an extension on that date to 31 August 2020.’

117 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

118 LEASE FOR NEW OFFICES IN BIRKENHEAD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

RESOLVED:

That further to Minute No.115 above, the content of the exempt Appendices 1 and 4 circulated with the agenda, be noted.

Councillors Tony Jones and Tom Usher returned to the meeting.

Councillor Pat Hackett informed that the last year had been a great experience but a bag of mixed emotions at times. Councillor Hackett was proud to have been Leader of a Cabinet and Council that had grown so much in a short time. He believed he had been part of something special. He had been privileged to work alongside so many ambitious individuals, leading a strong workforce to achieve collective goals and ultimately make massive strides in the Council's vision for the borough.

Councillor Hackett reported that during the past few months the Council had been dealing with a crisis never encountered before. How people lived and worked had been completely turned upside down. Faced with unprecedented challenges and pressures placed on the Council to protect and support the local community, like never before, he had watched the Council, its fantastic workforce and all Members of the Council overcome every barrier, make quick difficult decisions, and come together to lead the Council through one of the most difficult periods this country had seen since World War II. The way the workforce had adapted was beyond what it had been thought could happen and officers had been rightly praised for the quick turnaround to help local residents from March 2020 onwards, rightly winning plaudits as the first in the country on so many fronts. Councillor Hackett informed that the Cabinet sent out its sincere thanks to all the workforce as Wirral had, undoubtedly, led the way.

Councillor Hackett then introduced an eight-minute video presentation on the Council and Cabinet's achievements over the last extraordinary year. He also took the opportunity, at this last meeting of the Cabinet, to thank each of the Cabinet Members in turn along with the staff for their hard work during the last year. Councillor Hackett provided a summary of each of the following projects and initiatives:

- The Local Plan which would shape the borough for years to come.
- Replacing the boroughs Street Lights with energy efficient LED Lights.
- The Community Bank – North West Mutual Ltd.
- Keeping Wirral Green, a plan to tackle climate change.
- Wirral's evolving Cycling and Walking Infrastructure and Active Travel.
- Major Regeneration for Wirral.
- Affordable Living and Housing – High Quality New Homes.
- A Borough of Tourism and Culture.
- Support for Care, including funding made available.
- Real Living Wage including seeking accreditation.
- Support for Children and Young People - putting them at the centre of every decision made.
- Covid-19 – Feeding, Supporting and Protecting Wirral Residents.

Finally, Councillor Hackett informed that as the Council, cautiously, moved to some sort of business as usual it would have regard to what had been learnt and would use it to continue to build a Council that Wirral businesses and residents could be proud of and trust, working first and foremost for the residents of the borough. It would be a Council built on community.

Following the presentation each Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the officers for putting the presentation together, other Cabinet Members and Chief Officers and their Teams for the work they had done and their significant achievements against a very difficult backdrop of the covid-19 crisis.

Each Cabinet Member individually also paid tribute to Councillor Hackett, as Leader of the Council, thanking him for his leadership, his experience and advice, the atmosphere of optimism and collaboration and for delaying his retirement to assist with the crisis which had been very challenging. Councillor Hackett was wished health and happiness and a very long, fulfilling retirement and was told he would be missed by his colleagues, officers, ward residents and everyone he had helped in New Brighton, the wider Wirral area and the Liverpool City Region.

Councillor Hackett thanked the Cabinet Members for their nice comments and closed the meeting.