



Economy Regeneration & Development Committee

Date:	Wednesday, 26 January 2022
Time:	6.00 p.m.
Venue:	Floral Pavilion, New Brighton

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AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**
- 2. APOLOGIES**
- 3. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

4. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 12)

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee held on 22 November 2021, attached.

5. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question/statement by the deadline for submission.

5.1 Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Friday 21 January 2022 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

5.2 Statements and Petitions

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Friday 21 January 2022 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

Petitions may be presented to the Committee. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding one minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Chair will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. Please give notice of petitions to committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

5.3 Questions by Members

Questions by Members to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders 12.3 to 12.8.

SECTION A - KEY AND OTHER DECISIONS

6. REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (Pages 13 - 44)

7. DISPOSAL OF INDUSTRIAL ESTATE AT QUARRYBANK STREET, BIRKENHEAD (Pages 45 - 50)

8. APPOINTMENT OF A PREFERRED DEVELOPER FOR THE NEW FERRY REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME (Pages 51 - 64)

9. ACQUISITION OF FORMER CO-OP BUILDING - 100 NEW CHESTER ROAD, NEW FERRY (Pages 65 - 72)

- 10. SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT WORK PACKAGE 7
(Pages 73 - 84)**

SECTION B - BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 11. 2022/23 BUDGET UPDATE (Pages 85 - 178)**
- 12. LEGAL INPUT INTO MAJOR REGENERATION PROJECTS (Pages 179 - 196)**

SECTION C - WORK PROGRAMME / OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 13. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 197 - 204)**
- 14. 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.

- 15. APPOINTMENT OF A PREFERRED DEVELOPER FOR THE NEW FERRY REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME EXEMPT APPENDIX (Pages 205 - 206)**
- 16. LEGAL INPUT INTO MAJOR REGENERATION PROJECTS EXEMPT APPENDICES (Pages 207 - 214)**

4. ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

4.1 Composition:

Eleven (11) Members of the Council, subject to proportionality, which may be altered to accommodate the overall political balance calculation.

4.2 Terms of Reference

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee has responsibility for developing and delivering a vision for Wirral as a place. It is responsible for developing and determining or recommending all planning and transport policies, including the Local Plan, and infrastructure planning. It is also responsible for promoting regeneration, economic development and associated activities, including the tourism, culture and visitor economy, and for removing barriers to growth.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:

- (a) development and delivery of the Council's strategic objectives for planning, sustainability and transportation;
- (b) developing and recommending those plans and strategies which together comprise the Local Plan, subject to the time limited transfer of these functions to the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee (set out at paragraph 1.7 above) until such time as the Local Plan in development 2020/21 is adopted;
- (c) developing and adopting or recommending (if reserved to Council) other spatial planning documents, including but not limited to
 - (i) supplementary planning documents (SPD) and planning policy advice notes;
 - (ii) Master Plans and development briefs;
 - (iii) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
 - (iv) [The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) *when applicable*];
- (d) economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure, enterprise, skills and seeking, securing and managing external funds to achieve that, directly or in partnership with joint ventures and external companies or bodies as well as with the Combined Authority and government bodies;
- (e) the Council's functions and partnerships regarding the promotion of economic growth and the establishment and development of business;
- (f) the promotion and development of the economic factors in the area, such as seeking to ensure sufficient and appropriate

employment sites, investment, adult skills, apprenticeship schemes, productivity, development sites and so forth;

- (g) overseeing the progress of major projects (including major building, infrastructure or other projects involving the erection or significant alteration of major permanent structures or landmarks) undertaken by the Council directly or as enabler, funder or joint enterprise partner, including but not limited to the Wirral Growth Company LLP;
- (h) reviewing major projects and any project boards having regard to capacity to deliver, corporate priorities and resources, and advise the Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate;
- (i) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and
- (j) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

4.3 **Methodology**

- (a) **Enquiries and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.
- (b) **Overview and Scrutiny** - The Committee may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have a direct impact on the role or functions of the committee and the Committee can make recommendations to the relevant Committee on policies, budget and service delivery. Overview and scrutiny of the Council is an important part of the Committee's remit as part of a 'doing and reviewing' approach. Upon conclusion of a scrutiny exercise the Committee will produce a report containing recommendations for decision by the Policy and Resources Committee or other Committee as may be relevant. In doing so, the Committee shall have regard to the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4) of this Constitution.
- (c) **Stakeholders** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee

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ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 November 2021

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors K Greaney A Gardner
P Martin A Hodson
T Smith C Povall
G Wood D Mitchell
D Burgess-Joyce E Gleaves

48 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website for two years.

49 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies received

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

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. There were no declarations of interests

51 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November, 2021, be approved and adopted as a correct record subject to an amendment to page 3 of the minute pack.

The Chair noted that he had requested a standing item on future agendas, however, the draft minutes state that he suggested it.

52 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

52.1 **Public Questions**

Member of the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association submitted several questions.

1. William Featherstone on behalf of the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association.

On 22 October Birkenhead Market Tenants Association wrote to The Director of Regeneration and Place with our community's urgent proposal for a low funding reorganisation of the current market. Our aim is to create a void in the centre of the Market, rearrange stalls towards the perimeter and give the impression of a fuller market, improving the markets look and function. We have received no email response to this urgent proposal from any Council Officer, either positive or negative.

Our proposal involves lots of meaningful consultations with members of our community with a view to helping some members relocate. To keep costs to an absolute minimum we propose recycling existing wall panels, boarding and security shutters to block off the voided area within the market. These blocked areas will be camouflaged by stall holders displays.

We have consulted widely with our community and they have expressed a great deal of interest in this project.

To help progress our proposal we need to offer the impacted retailers the maximum choice of new locations.

We requested rental prices for vacant stalls within the market from the Market Manager.

He initially refused to divulge this public realm information stating it was confidential information and data protected.

We raised a petition and eventually the Market Manager released inflated rental prices for the vacant stalls.

Why is the Market Manager issuing suddenly inflated rental prices on vacant stalls to existing tenants?

Answer:

The pricing released is consistent with the average tenancy in the market and the open market value for the stalls. It is therefore not considered to be an inflated price

A supplemental question was asked querying the Council's rental proposals for G28 and G29 and the Chair indicated that he would provide a written response.

2. William Featherstone on behalf of Birkenhead Market Tenants Association.

Market Budget & Expenditure

As a community of responsible businesswomen and men, the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association (BMTA) are very aware of the financial pressures placed on Wirral Borough Council. Recent examples of market spending that many in our community have question include ...

Assistance for the Market Manager £35,000.00

At the recent Policy and Resources Committee reference was made to extra support being secured to assist the Market Manager.

Our community question the need for yet another assistant for the market manager.

There are more market staff than ever and yet there are less cleaners and security, even the security cameras aren't monitored.

We consider that Wirral Borough Council should start an immediate review of market staffing, job functions and salaries.

Advertising £40,000.00 ?

The BMTA have had little consultation concerning the advertising budget, we are informed after money is spent, not before.

Advertising includes radio station advertising on a station that none of our customers appear to listen to.

Many members of our community feel this advertising is badly targeted and they would've preferred the money was spent after the urgent reorganisation of stalls.

Gazebos £40,000.00

Forty gazebos purchased for the Mini Market proposal. The gazebos were ordered even though the Mini Market was never approved by this Committee. They sit in storage within the market untouched.

CBRE Consultation £12,000.00

A redundant consultation once it was decided that the market would stay where it is.

Grand Total £127,000.00

We accept £127,000 may be a small amount to WBC when committees talk about millions. But it is important to our community that £127,000 is spent wisely and we wish to assist WBC by offering to jointly monitor the market budget with management. Our aim being to avoid any unnecessary spending in our community's name.

Will Wirral Borough Council allow our community representatives to participate in market budget decisions before monies are spent with a view to reducing unnecessary expenditure?

Answer

Thank you for your question, which I will answer in two parts.

In answer to your question as to whether BMTA representatives could participate in market budget decisions, it is not always possible to share budget information due its sensitive nature, also where grant funding has been received this will come with specific requirements as to what it can be used for.

In regard to your second question, the Christmas Marketing Campaign (market) is funded by the Welcome Back Fund for COVID Safety with a spend deadline of March 2021 and with clear eligibility criteria.

However, officers are committed to discussing ideas and plans with the BMTA and welcome input into these.

William Featherstone queried if a further question could be sent via email. The Chair confirmed he would be happy to receive and respond to any questions

3. William Featherstone

Any member of the public can ask for the rental price of a vacant stall in Birkenhead Market. The Birkenhead Market Tenants Association had to raise a petition to get the market manager to release rental information. Is the Market Manager under instruction to obstruct the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association.

Answer

The Council has provided the detail requested and is committed to the market and ensuring it remains a focus of the town centre of Birkenhead in all aspects of the current and future plans. The decision to release the information was not based on the petition received (of which you had 26 signatures) but with a view to collaborating with the association for mutual benefit.

A supplemental question was asked querying the Council's rental proposals for G28 and G29 and a response will be provided in due course.

52.2 Statements and Petitions

There were no statements or petitions received.

52.3 Questions by Members

No questions from Members were received

53 TOWN DEAL - ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT

The Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. Members of the Committee were informed that on 15 July 2021, the Council received notification of the outcome of a submission it had made to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC Town Deal Programme).

This announcement set out that the Council had been invited to enter into a Town Deal for Birkenhead, up to a value of £25,000,000. This 'in principle' award was offered subject to the successful completion and approval of businesses cases for the projects included in the bid submission. Both the Council and DLUHC had agreed the Heads of Terms.

The report set out the next steps with Members asked to give consideration to the tight time scales, as well as agreeing to delegate a number of decisions to the Director of Regeneration and Place in terms of accepting the grant and commencing activity to develop and deliver the Town Deal for Birkenhead.

Councillor Emily Gleaves queried how the activities being funded at Egerton House would align with those being progressed at Start Yard. The Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer confirmed that activities would be complementary. This was followed by a question from Councillor Burgess-Joyce who queried in terms of the 5% upfront payment if it was a non-refundable amount and whether it would be lost if not spent. The Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer commented to say that this was her understanding.

The Director of Regeneration and Place also confirmed that Town Deal Board decisions would be referred back to the Committee unless they were within the scope of a delegated officer decision making.

Resolved -

That Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) Note the content of the report and the announcement from Government regarding the Town Deal funding award in relation to Birkenhead;**
- (2) Note the re-profiling of the funding allocation for projects as set out in paragraph 3.8 of this report;**

- (3) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to accept the offer and funding from DLUHC, via a grant made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003;**
- (4) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to progress delivery of the Town Deal Programme, in line with the Section 31 Grant and the Town Investment Plan, and to implement a change control process (if required);**
- (5) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to allocate the Town Deal pre-development funding of £1,250,000 (5% of the total award) on receipt;**
- (6) Authorise the Director of Resources as S151 Officer to review and approve business cases, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, and submit the results to DLUHC in order to release the remaining funds; and**
- (7) Authorise the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place and the Director of Resources to enter into any necessary agreements or other legal documentation to implement the above recommendations**
- (8) the above recommendations**

54 **ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL TO 2026**

The Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer introduced the report which provided details of a new Economic Strategy for Wirral.

The Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision set out a shared partnership vision to improve outcomes for Wirral residents, supported by a Growth Plan which translated Wirral's ambitions for economic growth into a clear direction of travel.

Over the five years of the Growth Plan, significant progress had been made in positioning Wirral as a place to live, work, visit and invest.

A new strategy, a Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026, had been developed to provide a set of goals and objectives for the Council and its partners to work to until 2026

Alongside this, the Birkenhead 2040 Framework was being developed to support a transformational regeneration programme along the 'Left Bank' of the River Mersey stretching from New Brighton to Bromborough, with a particular focus on the creation of a sustainable, waterfront urban garden community in Birkenhead. This was one of the largest and most ambitious regeneration programmes in the UK with the potential to create up to 20,000 new homes over the next 20 years through a radical re-use of neglected and brownfield sites, underpinned by the emerging Local Plan.

Members queried if there was a separate strategy to attract inward investment to the area.

The Director of Regeneration and Place commented that part of his remit was to ensure a supply of suitable accommodation for businesses interested in sites in Wirral. Previously there had been a deficit of Grade A premises, but new office space would be going live late in 2021. In terms of Wirral Waters, this was being de-risked and overlaid in terms of a range of projects and initiatives including the Freeport designation and the Maritime Knowledge Hub project which involved local universities and the maritime accelerator project. A workshop was suggested to discuss this in more detail.

Councillor Karl Greaney queried how the project would be monitored. The AD: Chief Regeneration Officer confirmed this would be critical to the success and regular reports would be brought back to committee to ensure there is sufficient oversight and monitoring.

The Chair advised Members that he had requested the director seriously consider a single point of contact for this project, to avoid any speculative contact.

Resolved –

That the Wirral Economic Strategy 2021 - 2026, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

55 **LISCARD NEIGHBOURHOOD FRAMEWORK: AN INTEGRATED MASTERPLAN**

The Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer introduced the report which provided details of a new Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard: An Integrated Masterplan.

The Council commissioned BDP, supported by Aspinall Verdi and Curtis, to produce a long-term framework for Liscard in March 2020. The framework was intended to provide an ambitious vision and strategic context to drive forward and guide the sustainable economic growth and renewal of Liscard over the following 15 years.

The Neighbourhood Framework had been funded through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Town Centre Fund, which aimed to support the viability and vitality of town centres. In addition to the Neighbourhood Framework, the funding was being used to support a range of interventions. These included the diversification of activity to bring vacant premises back into use, public realm and street scene improvements, and a number of community projects.

The AD: Chief Regeneration Officer took Members questions and noted their concerns around Liscard being dwarfed by projects in Birkenhead and Liverpool. She responded to say that this was a distinctive offer and a key piece of the Wirral left bank project.

Members commented to state that they were pleased the project was moving forward and queried the mass transit and active travel options for the area. The AD: Chief Regeneration Officer stated that work was progressing on the initial phases of mass transit and the process would be iterative. There were outline plans in terms of the cycling network which were currently under consultation.

Resolved -

That the Liscard Neighbourhood Framework: An Integrated Masterplan, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved as the Council's regeneration strategy for Liscard.

56 **ACQUISITION OF FORMER CO-OP BUILDING - 100 NEW CHESTER ROAD, NEW FERRY**

The Assistant Director for Special Projects introduced the report which sought approval for a recommendation to be made to Policy and Resources Committee for the purchase of the former Co-op building ("The Property") in New Ferry as a strategic acquisition to support the delivery of the master plan for the area. The regeneration of the town centre was a priority for the Council following the explosion in March 2017.

Councillor David Mitchell asked for assurance that any future building on the site would be complementary to area, noting that the architecture in Port Sunlight contributed to the visitor economy. The Assistant Director assured Members that high quality design is essential to the project.

Councillor Andrew Gardner queried the valuation of £700k and asked why the Council were looking to pay this, when the premises had failed to sell in the open market. The Assistant Director advised that the original asking price was £1.5 Million and if acquired with the adjacent site there would in valuation terms be a 'marriage value.'

Councillor Cherry Povall asked for an approximate time scale, noting the poor condition of the site. The Assistant Director advised that if the plot is secured the Council would demolish the building upon acquisition.

Members then further discussed the valuation and asked about the possibilities of an additional valuation.

The Chair noted that whilst the Committee wanted to support the People of New Ferry, it was not an unreasonable request a second valuation and a further report be brought back to committee.

Resolved –

That a second valuation of the former Co-op building - 100 New Chester Road, New Ferry be undertaken and an updated report brought back to Committee in January 2022

57 **EXMOUTH STREET, SEAMUS O'DONNELLS**

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced a report on behalf of the Director of Regeneration and Place, which sought approval for a recommendation to be made to Policy and Resources Committee to dispose of the Council's freehold interest in land at Exmouth Street, Birkenhead to the existing lessee that holds a ground lease of the site and owns the operational public house which is sited thereon.

Councillor Andrew Hodson confirmed he did not have an objection to the sale in principle, and Councillor Paul Martin queried whether the valuation was recent.

Councillor Martin suggested that the current value could be subject to an uplift due to the regeneration work currently being undertaken in Birkenhead and suggested deferring the decision until a valuation could be produced.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that it was a recent valuation and reminded Members that the Council have possession of the site but only retains freehold interest. The Director of Regeneration and Place also advised Members that Council valuers had given proper consideration to the freehold value and other comparable information. Members were also asked to note the recent reports by DLUHC regarding the need for disposal of assets. He also raised the potential for a backlog should any asset disposal reports be referred back for additional valuations.

The Assistant Chief Executive stated that he would be happy to facilitate a workshop to explain the process of valuation in more detail. He stated that the Council had invited auditors to review land disposal practices and they were found to be appropriate.

Councillor David Burgess-Joyce confirmed that assurance was needed and that there should not be a rush to dispose of Assets over the coming months. Councillor Emily Gleaves asked officers if it would be possible to bring three different valuations when presenting asset disposal reports to committee.

The Chair, Councillor Tony Jones reminded Members the cost of any additional valuations would be deducted from the overall sale value. The Director of Regeneration and Place expressed caution and the need to move quickly in regard to asset disposals. He advised that a RICS Registered Valuer 'red book' valuation does cost the Council a significant sum and seeking further valuations would be at a cost and may cause a backlog, however he noted that if further assurance is needed then officers may need to give further consideration to the process.

Resolved –

That Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to approve that:

(1) The freehold interest of land at Exmouth Street, Birkenhead, (which is held via a ground lease with 56 years unexpired and occupied by an operational public house with a grassed area to one side), be declared surplus to the Council's requirements; and

(2) Authorisation be given to the Director of Law & Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration & Place to dispose the property to the current lessee, JSM Company Group Ltd for a price of £120,000, plus payment of the Council's legal costs.

58 **PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021**

The Director of Public Health introduced the Public Health Annual Report which was the independent annual report and a statutory requirement.

The 2020/2021 Report described enduring health inequalities in Wirral, the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these differences in health outcomes and set out recommendations to improve everyone's health.

The Public Health Annual Report was an important vehicle to identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and inform local inter agency action.

The 2020/2021 Report sought to direct action that needed to be taken to reduce the impact of health inequalities on Wirral's residents and improve health for everyone in the borough. The Director of Public Health noted Members concerns on this, as well as educational attainment levels and suggested that is a subject which needed redressing and reviewing with a system wide focus.

Resolved – that the recommendations detailed within the Public Health Annual Report 2020/21 be endorsed.

59 QUARTER 2 MONITOR REPORT

The Senior Finance Manager introduced the report which provided a summary of the projected year-end revenue and capital position for Economy, Regeneration & Development Committee as at the end of Quarter 2 (September 2021) of the 2021/22 financial year.

The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of their specific budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets. The Committee was accountable for ensuring that the committee budgets remained within the relevant envelope and would take collective responsibility via the Policy and Resources Committee to ensure that the whole Council budget remained in balance at all times, by agreeing mitigating actions to bring the budget back in line, should a deficit be forecast.

Councillor David Mitchell queried the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service and a managed cost return for this. Councillor Mitchell also queried the cost of IT within the directorate.

The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that the service level agreement was being revived. In regard to the IT query, the Senior Finance Manager confirmed that the IT costs were to ensure that the infrastructure in building control was updated and included training. Members were assured that this would ensure savings could be made by harmonising the systems and the Director of Regen and Place advised he would update on the current status of the project.

Resolved – That

(1). Note the projected year-end revenue forecast variance of £0.128m favourable position as reported at quarter 2 (Jul_Sep) of 2021-22.

(2). Note progress on the achievement of approved savings and the projected year end forecast position at quarter 2 (Jul_Sep) of 2021-22.

(3). Note the reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments

(4). Note the projected year-end capital forecast expenditure position of £17.649m as reported at quarter 2 (Jul_Sep) of 2021-22.

60 BUDGET WORKSHOPS OUTCOME REPORT 2022-23

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report which noted feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops which had been held in 2021. The workshops enabled officer and Member liaison on proposed budget options, to facilitate discussion and allow direction to be obtained on further analysis required. The Budget Workshops also provided an opportunity for alternative proposals to be considered. The Policy and Service Committees were responsible for those services being delivered under their operational

headings within their annual budget envelope. The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, had been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan and a budget to recommend to the Council.

The Director of Regeneration and Place advised members that the focus was more on income generation opportunities than savings. Because of the recent assurance reports from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, he was awaiting further information on income targets and would update Members as soon as he had received information.

The Chair asked for assurance that any budget savings would not impact on regeneration opportunities.

Resolved – That the Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in appendix 1, be reported to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

61 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Chair introduced the work programme update. The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme.

Councillor Emily Gleaves noted that the Temporary Market item was duplicated and asked that this be updated.

Members of the Committee also queried the addition of a Legal Services performance report to the work programme and the Lead Principal Lawyer assured Members that a performance dashboard was being produced with input from officers from the regeneration directorate and this would be presented to Committee at its meeting in January 2021. He indicated that he would share a working version of this document with the Chair and Spokespersons of this Committee in December 2021.

Resolved – That content of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year be approved.



ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 26 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report recommends the approval of revisions to the future timetable for the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan, as set out in the revised Local Development Scheme attached to this report at Appendix 1. The revised scheme will replace the Local Development Scheme adopted by the Council in October 2020.

It has become necessary to review the Local Development Scheme because of the delay caused by the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on work progress and the need to complete essential evidence studies. This has had the knock-on effect of delaying the preparation of the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan.

The Council is still under the threat of intervention from the Government because of the timescale for producing the Local Plan. The revised timescale, and the reasons for it, have been discussed with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

This affects all wards and is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to:

Approve the adoption of the revised Local Development Scheme as set out at Appendix 1 of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This revised document replaces the Local Development Scheme adopted by the Council on 3rd October 2020. It has become necessary to review the Local Development Scheme because of changes to the timetable for the Local Plan. The Covid 19 pandemic has delayed the commissioning and completion of several evidence base studies and on-site assessment work. This includes work commissioned in response to submissions made at the Regulation 18 consultation in early 2020 including updates to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Employment Land Study, and transport related studies.
- 1.2 In addition, in late summer 2021 the Council had to procure at short notice new consultants to undertake the viability assessment of the Local Plan following the withdrawal of the previously appointed consultants due to unforeseen circumstances which meant they would be unable to complete their work to the agreed timetable. This has had the knock-on effect of delaying the preparation of the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan.
- 1.3 In order to ensure that the Local Development Scheme is up to date and reflects the above practicalities, it is appropriate to seek approval for an amendment to the scheme as set out at Appendix 1.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 There are no alternative options, as national regulations require the publication of an up-to-date Local Development Scheme, as soon as possible after the information becomes available.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Wirral Local Plan (previously the Core Strategy Local Plan) is a Development Plan Document that is intended to set the long-term vision, objectives, strategic and non-strategic policies for the Borough over a 15 year period. It is also intended to provide the framework for future Development Plan Documents, Neighbourhood Plans, Supplementary Planning Documents and development management decisions.
- 3.2 The Council previously published the Issues and Options report at the Regulation 18 stage to the timescale agreed with the DLUHC. The revised timetable for the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan, as set out at Appendix 1, has been discussed with DLUHC.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the publication of the revised Local Development Scheme.
- 4.2 The continued preparation of the Wirral Local Plan will be funded from the £400,000 Local Plan revenue budget within the Regeneration and Place Directorate and use of the £729,000 that is earmarked from the Financial Resilience Reserve.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 15 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) (“the 2004 Act”) requires the Council to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme. The scheme must list the development plan documents and the subject matter and geographical area to which each development plan document is to relate and the timetable for the preparation and revision of the development plan documents.
- 5.2 Section 15(8) of the 2004 Act states that the Council must revise their local development scheme at such time as they consider appropriate. Furthermore Section 15(9A) of the 2004 Act states that the Council must make the Scheme and any more up-to-date information on the timetable available to the public, as soon as it becomes available
- 5.3 The proposals within this report will enable the Council to meet the statutory requirements of the 2004 Act and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 5.4 The Local Development Scheme is not part of the development plan

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Council’s Local Plan will be prepared primarily using existing IT and staff resources in the Regeneration and Place Directorate and the Council’s Transformation Office. Additional specialist resources will also be used to provide essential technical support as required.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The implications of paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is that unless additional land for residential development can be identified in the emerging Local Plan, the absence of an appropriate residential land supply could lead to the loss of appeals against the refusal of planning permission, with costs awarded against the Council, unless any adverse impacts of approving the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed.
- 7.2 The Local Development Scheme will be used by Government to assess the Council’s progress in the preparation of an up-to-date Local Plan.

7.3 The Secretary of State has the power to direct amendments to the Local Development Scheme, as well as powers over its content and review.

7.4 Full details of identified risks are set out in section 11 of Appendix 1.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 There is no requirement for the revised Local Development Scheme to be subject to external consultation. The documents set out within it are subject to various rounds of consultation in accordance with the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2014 (as amended), the revised procedures required by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning (England Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

8.2 National planning guidance states that the Local Development Scheme must be made available publicly and kept up to date so that local communities and interested parties can keep track of progress. Local planning authorities should publish their Local Development Scheme on their website. An up-dated record of progress is available on the Council's website at: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/wirral-new-local-plan/new-local-plan>

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The revision of the Local Development Scheme would not have any adverse impacts on any protected characteristics, although there is the potential for the documents included to have adverse impacts. To mitigate this, each of the proposed documents in will be subject to their own equalities assessments as a necessary part of the process of their production to ensure emerging policies are suitably framed to promote equal opportunities for all. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken at the earliest possible stage.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Local Development Scheme does not have any direct environmental or climate impacts. However, as the scheme facilitates the preparation of a Local Plan there will be a series of potential impacts on the environment through the adoption of the new Local Plan. These will be assessed and mitigated through the Sustainability Appraisal which has been prepared to support the preparation of the Local Plan. The Examination in Public will be the forum in which the environmental or climate impacts of the Local Plan proposals can be examined.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Local Development Scheme does not have any community wealth implications directly but the adoption of the Local Plan will result in the delivery of significant development which will give opportunities for social wealth capture. The Submission Draft Local Plan will contain a Social Value Policy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Revised Local Development Scheme

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) (Sections 15, 17, 35 and 36 refer)

[Localism Act 2011](#) (Sections 111 and 113 refer)

[Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017](#) (Sections 11 and 12 refer)

[Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\)\(England\) Regulations 2012](#) (Regulation 34)

National Planning Policy Framework

[Planning Practice Guidance](#)

(DLUHC)

[Local Development Scheme for Wirral](#) (Wirral Council, October 2020)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Leaders Decision	25 th September 2020
Cabinet - Core Strategy Local Plan - Report of Further Consultation on Housing Need and Land Supply	27 February 2017 (Minute 96)
Environment Overview and Scrutiny – Wirral Local Plan - Letter from Secretary of State	7December 2017(Minute40)
Delegated – Local Development Scheme review	21 December 2017
Environment Overview and Scrutiny – Wirral Local Plan – Report of Progress since 2014	31 January 2018 (Minute 46)
Council – Local Development Scheme adoption	19 March 2018 (Minute 132)
Cabinet Core Strategy Local Plan Review of Development Options	23 July 2018 (Minute 17)
Cabinet - Wirral Local Plan – update report	17 December 2018 (Minute 47)
Cabinet – Approval of Revised Local Development Scheme	30 September 2019 (Minute 33)
	14 October 2019 (Minute 72)

Council – Approval of Revised Local Development Scheme Delegated – Local Development Scheme	3 rd October 2020
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WIRRAL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 (SECTION 15)

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME FOR WIRRAL

JANUARY 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

- .. The Local Development Scheme for Wirral is a statutory document setting out the programme for the preparation of Local Development Documents produced in accordance with Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 1.2 The Council's Local Plan will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and will play a major role in the determination of individual planning applications and in other decisions taken by the Council and by others under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The first Local Development Scheme for Wirral was approved by the Secretary of State on 31 March 2005 and came into effect on 20 May 2005. Subsequent reviews took place in July 2006, July 2007, January 2010, February 2012, December 2014, December 2017, October 2019, and October 2020.
- 2.2 This current document replaces the Local Development Scheme adopted by the Council on 14th October 2020. It has become necessary to review the Local Development Scheme because of changes to the timetable for the Local Plan arising from the implications of Covid 19 which originally delayed the commissioning and completion of several evidence base studies. including work commissioned in response to submissions made at the Regulation 18 consultation in early 2020. In addition, in late summer 2021 the Council had to procure at short notice new consultants to undertake the viability assessment of the Local Plan following the withdrawal of the previously appointed consultants due to unforeseen circumstances which meant they would be unable to complete their work to the agreed timetable. This has had the knock-on effect of delaying the preparation of the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan.
- 2.3 Local Development Schemes no longer need to be approved by the Secretary of State before they can come into effect but the Secretary of State has powers to direct amendments to schemes.

3 THE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR WIRRAL

- 3.1 The planning policy framework for Wirral is made up of a number of Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Planning Documents that have been prepared in accordance with subject to a statutory process which together form the

Statutory Development Plan for Wirral, and a number of other Local Development Documents such as Supplementary Planning Documents.

4 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR WIRRAL

- 4.1 The statutory Development Plan for the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral currently comprises the ‘saved’ policies in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral, adopted by the Council in February 2000 and the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, adopted in July 2013, together with Neighbourhood Development Plans for Devonshire Park and Hoylake.

Unitary Development Plan for Wirral (February 2000)

- 4.2 The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is an ‘old-style’ development plan that will be replaced by the new Wirral Local Plan and other documents contained within the Local Plan Framework for Wirral.

- 4.3 A list of the policies and proposals that are no longer in force, following the adoption of the Joint Waste Local Plan, can be viewed on the Council’s website at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/unitary-development-plan/written>

- 4.4 The remaining policies of the Unitary Development Plan, including the Written Statement and Proposals Map, can be viewed on the Council’s website at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/unitary-development-plan>

Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton (July 2013)

- 4.5 The Joint Waste Local Plan was adopted by each of the six partner councils to come into effect from 18 July 2013. The Joint Waste Local Plan was resolved to be adopted by Wirral Council on 15 July 2013 (Minute 17 refers).

- 4.6 The Joint Waste Local Plan can be viewed on the Council’s website at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/joint-waste-local-plan-merseyside>

Made Neighbourhood Development Plans

- 4.7 The Neighbourhood Development Plan for Devonshire Park was made (adopted) in December 2015 and the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Hoylake was made in December 2016. The Neighbourhood Development Plans can be viewed on the Council web site at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning>

Other Planning Documents

- 4.8 There are a number of additional documents which sit alongside the Development Plan. These documents currently include:
- a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes and Supplementary Planning Documents to support the delivery of existing adopted Development Plan policies;
 - a Statement of Community Involvement;
 - the Local Development Scheme; and
 - a series of Annual Monitoring Reports.

5 WIRRAL'S FUTURE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 In future, the Development Plan for Wirral will comprise the following documents:
- The Wirral Local Plan and Policies Map;
 - The Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton;
 - The Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region (to be produced by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority); and
 - Neighbourhood Planning documents, including Neighbourhood Development Plans, which may be prepared by the local community.
- 5.2 Other planning documents will include:
- Supplementary Planning Documents and other technical guidance to support the delivery of the Local Plan;
 - a Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule (if adopted);
 - The Local Development scheme;
 - The Statement of Community Involvement; and

- Annual Monitoring Reports.

- 5.3 The Joint Waste Local Plan, Neighbourhood Development Plans and the Proposals Map will have status alongside the Unitary Development Plan, as part of the statutory Development Plan for Wirral, until the Unitary Development Plan is fully replaced by the Wirral Local Plan and Policies Map.
- 5.4 A list of the Local Development Documents that have already been adopted is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.5 This review of the Local Development Scheme provides for the completion of the Wirral Local Plan, which will set out the strategic policies for the area, with which Neighbourhood Plans will need to be in general conformity.

6 THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN

- 6.1 The Wirral Local Plan (previously the Core Strategy Local Plan) is a Development Plan Document that is intended to set the long-term vision, objectives, strategic and non-strategic policies for the Borough over the 16 year period 2021 to 2037 and to provide the framework for future Development Plan Documents, Neighbourhood Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 6.2 Previous Local Development Schemes proposed a two-stage process of Local Plan preparation, initially focused on the completion of the Core Strategy Local Plan (containing mainly strategic policies, which would only partially replace the Unitary Development Plan) which would be followed by the second stage preparation of a site-specific Land Allocations and a Heritage Local Plan.
- 6.3 The Council is now preparing a single Wirral Local Plan, which will replace the Unitary Development Plan in its entirety. The Wirral Local Plan will also now include detailed site-specific policies including site allocations and development management policies, and a Policies Map to replace the Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map.
- 6.4 The stages undertaken to prepare the previous Core Strategy and the subsequent 2018 Development Options Review in 2018 can be viewed on the Council's web site here: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan>

The New Local Plan for Wirral

- 6.5 The Council's original intention was to re-publish the Local Plan as a revised proposed submission draft under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. However, the Council decided that an additional stage of Regulation 18 consultation was required to take account of changes in national planning policy and to ensure that all the revised spatial options and reasonable alternatives and the Council's revised preferred option, are documented and made available for public comment before any final proposals are prepared.

Wirral Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation (Regulation 18)

- 6.6 Consultation on the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035 Issues and Options Consultation document under Regulation 18 therefore took place between 27th January and 6th April 2020. This included a two-week extension to the normal six-week consultation period due to the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions imposed towards the end of March 2020, although all planned public drop-in sessions were completed before that time. The consultation also sought comments on a number of evidence base studies, potential allocations for housing and employment development sites, Interim Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessments and a call for sites to inform the 2020 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- 6.7 Consultation on the following evidence base documents and updates to existing evidence took place in June and July 2020:
- Agricultural Economy and Land Study Addendum;
 - Wirral Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Addendum;
 - Wirral Local Landscape Designations Review 2020; and
 - Exploring The Computation of Housing Need in Wirral 2020.

6.8 During 2021 a number of new evidence base documents and updates to existing evidence were also subject to public consultation:

- Draft Wirral Environmental Sensitivity Study: 6-week consultation ended 29 March 2021;
- Draft Employment Land and Premises Study: 6-week consultation ended 31 March 2021;
- Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: 6-week consultation ended 5 April 2021;
- Wirral Housing Density Study 2021: 6-week consultation ended 27 April 2021;
- Birkenhead 2040 Framework: consultation March - June 2021; and
- Local Green Space Designations: Review of Sites: 8-week consultation ended 6 August 2021.

Future Local Plan Timetable

- 6.7 The table below sets out the amended timetable for the production of the Wirral Local Plan. The Plan period is now proposed to be extended to 2037 to ensure that there is a 15-year plan period from the date of adoption.

Wirral Local Plan Timetable		
Plan Preparation Stage	Purpose of the stage	Dates (Note that all timings are subject to the programming of Committee and Council meetings)
Evidence gathering and draft plan preparation	Formulate vision and objectives for the Local Plan, evidence gathering, identify development requirements, identify potential spatial options, identify relevant economic, social and environmental objectives to inform the sustainability appraisal	April 2019 to December 2021
Public Consultation on draft local plan (Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Regulations 2012) and continued work on evidence gathering	This document brings together all the strategic evidence and sets out the housing and employment requirements for the Borough over the plan period and set out the Council's preferred options for distributing this development including preferred sites.	January 27 th – April 6 th 2020
Council approval of publication of the Submission Draft Local Plan	This is the full Local Plan that the Council wishes to submit to the Secretary of State for Examination. It will include both strategic and non-strategic policies. All the evidence will be in place at the time of publication. It is the version	Between March and June 2022 (NB: election and post-election governance arrangements will prevent approval in April)

	that the Council considers “sound” in terms of the legal requirements placed on plan preparation and to be justified and deliverable. Following the Council’s approval of the Publication version of the Local Plan the policies and proposals in the Local plan will have significant weight in the decision-taking process.	
Publication of the Local Plan: (Regulation 19)	This will be the formal period for representations to the draft plan for a minimum period of 6 weeks, and will give communities, stakeholders and other interested persons the final opportunity to make comments on the plan relating to the “soundness” and legal compliance of the Local Plan. The Council will not review these comments other than to identify key issues and potential modifications to the Local Plan. The representations will be passed directly to the Inspector undertaking the Local Plan Examination.	For a 6-week period – commencing between March and June 2022
Submission (Regulation 22)	This is an administrative stage and relates to the formal submission of the documents (including all formal representations received during the Publication Deposit period, statutory assessments, and evidence base documents) to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a Planning Inspector.	Between July and September 2022
Local Plan Examination	The formal examination of the Local Plan will start when the plan is submitted. Hearings will be held into specific aspects of the plan during the	Commencement -Mid to Late 2022

	examination, and “objectors” will have the right to be involved in that process. The Planning Inspector will assess the Local Plan to determine whether it has been prepared in line with the duty to cooperate, other legal requirements, and whether it is “sound” in line with the requirement of planning legislation. At this stage the Council can request that the Inspector makes recommendations which would address the issues identified during the Examination in order to ensure that the plan is “sound”, including proposed modifications to the Local Plan, which may require additional public consultation. The Inspector’s conclusions will be set out in a report issued to the Council.	
Local Plan Adoption	The Council will receive the inspector’s Report and consider the recommendations, before it formally adopts the Local Plan.	Mid to late 2023 (Council)

6.8 The timetable following the submission of the Local Plan (Regulation 22) should be regarded as **indicative only** and will be for the Planning Inspector (appointed to undertake the public examination of the soundness and legal compliance of the proposals) to determine. The length of the examination and reporting will depend on the number of representations received and the resources available at the Planning Inspectorate at the time. Therefore, the examination and reporting times shown may need to be revised at a later date. The appointed Planning Inspector will decide how the examination will run once the documents and final representations have been submitted. There may also be a requirement to prepare and consult on main modifications to the Local Plan.

6.9 The estimated date for the adoption of the Wirral Local Plan, following submission to public examination, is now Late 2023

6.10 A continuously up-dated record of progress is available on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/local-development-scheme>

7.0 Supporting evidence and other planning documents

7.1 Whilst not forming part of the Local Plan, the council will produce other supporting documents to aid the preparation or implementation of Local Plan policies:

Evidence Base

In order to carry out the preparation of the new Local Plan, the council will develop and maintain a sound evidence base. Necessary research and studies will be conducted and will be supplemented by research undertaken by others as appropriate. Providing a sound and comprehensive evidence base is fundamental to developing sound planning documents. The key evidence base documents will be made available to view and download from the relevant Local Plan webpage at the time of publication of key Local Plan preparation stages.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

A key requirement in our planning system is to ensure community and stakeholder engagement ensuring people's views can be taken into account. This commitment is reinforced by the requirement for all Local Planning Authorities to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI is not a DPD, and is not subject to public Examination.

The current Statement of Community Involvement was adopted by the Council in March 2021. It details how the community and stakeholders will be involved in the preparation, alteration and review of all local plan documents as well as the consideration of minor and major planning applications. To ensure the SCI remains relevant and has regard to new methods of engagement, the council will keep this under review, updating it as necessary.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required for all Development Plan Documents. The process of undertaking and reporting on a SA, which incorporates strategic environmental assessment (SEA), is an important tool used during plan-making. The SA

assesses the likely effects of the plan on environmental, social and economic objectives when judged against reasonable alternatives.

Work on producing the Local Plan has been informed and supported by corresponding work on the SA. The findings of the SA, will inform the DPD and will be a material consideration in determining soundness of the document at the Examination. The SA will be made available at the same time key Local Plan documents are published and comments (under Regulation 18) or representations (under Regulation 19) invited.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

The Council must consider whether the policies and/or site allocations in the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site directly or indirectly either alone, or in combination with other plans and projects. European sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Marine SACs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and *Ramsar* sites. The overall purpose of the HRA is to conclude whether or not the proposals and policies of the Local Plan would adversely affect the integrity of European sites.

The HRA helps inform the Councils' decisions on where to locate development by assessing policies and site allocations in terms of their impact on the SPA, ensuring any significant impact is avoided or identifying how and where mitigation can be employed.

The HRA will be made available at the same time key Local Plan documents are published and comments invited.

Local Plan Policies Map

The Policies Map identifies sites allocations and areas of planning constraint, such as Green Belt and other local and national designations. The policies map is updated as new DPDs are prepared or revised so as to provide a clear visual illustration of the application of policies across the area.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide further information and guidance on the implementation of Local Plan policies and can be given substantial weight in planning decisions. The Local Development Scheme is no longer required to set out the timetable for the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents.

- 7.2 The latest progress on the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents>.

8 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING DOCUMENTS

- 8.1 Neighbourhood Planning documents are prepared by the local community and adopted by the Council, to provide further detail on planning proposals within local areas.
- 8.2 The Council has now designated five local neighbourhood planning areas, at Devonshire Park; Hoylake; Leasowe; Birkenhead and Tranmere; and for Birkenhead North, to allow Neighbourhood Forums to prepare their own planning proposals for their respective designated areas. Neighbourhood Development Plans have been 'made' (adopted) for Devonshire Park (December 2015) and Hoylake (December 2016). The Neighbourhood Forums for Hoylake and Devonshire Park were re-designated in October 2018 for a further period of five years. The Council were notified that the Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Forum was formally dissolved in June 2018.
- 8.3 Progress on the preparation of neighbourhood planning documents can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning>.

9 DUTY TO CO-OPERATE

9.1 The Council adopted a Statement of Co-operation on Local Planning, with City Region Partners, on 17 October 2016 (Council, Minute 64 refers). The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) sets out a duty for public bodies to cooperate on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Strategic planning matters are defined as (paragraph 20 refers):

- Housing, employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development,
- the provision of infrastructure, minerals and energy,
- community facilities, and
- conserving and enhancing the historic, built and natural environment and planning measures to climate change mitigation and adaptation

9.2 Following participation in a national pilot project a Liverpool City Region Statement of Common Ground has been jointly prepared during 2019 and was signed and adopted in March 2020. The Council will also need to prepare separate Statements of Common Ground to address co-operation with Cheshire West and Chester Council and other relevant stakeholders.

10 RESOURCES

10.1 Future land use planning policy documents are prepared by the Forward Planning Team in the Council's Regeneration and Place Directorate. To assist in the preparation of the Local Plan the Council has utilised the services of additional planning and other technical specialists.

11 RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 The principal risks to the delivery of the timetable set out in this Local Development Scheme are set out in Appendix 2 and will be kept under constant review.

12 MONITORING & REVIEW

12.1 Progress on Local Plan preparation is reviewed annually in the Council's statutory Monitoring Reports. Previous Monitoring Reports can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/development-monitoring>.

- 12.2 Changes to the Local Plan Regulations now require that local plans must be reviewed every 5 years from the date of adoption, by undertaking an assessment to determine whether the policies need updating. Local planning authorities have to decide either:
- that their policies do not need updating and publish their reasons for this decision; and/ or
 - that one or more policies do need updating, and update their Local Development Scheme to set out the timetable for this revision.
- 12.3 The preparation of the Wirral Local Plan and the Local Development Scheme provides for the review and replacement of the policies and proposals currently set out in the 'saved policies' of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan adopted February 2000.

13 USEFUL CONTACTS

- 13.1 The Forward Planning Team can be contacted:

by post at:

Wirral Council, Regeneration and Place, PO Box 290, Brighton Street, Wallasey CH27 9FQ

by telephone at: 0151 691 8110

or at forwardplanning@wirral.gov.uk

14 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 14.1 The following documents provide additional information on local development document processes and requirements:
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (HMSO 2004, Chapter 5) (as amended)
 - Localism Act 2011 (HMSO 2011, Chapter 20) (as amended)
 - Housing and Planning Act 2016 (HMSO, Chapter 22)
 - Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 (HMSO, Chapter 20)

- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (HMSO SI 2012 No.767) (as amended)
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (HMSO, SI 2004 No 1633)
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 (HMSO, 1994 No 2716) (as amended)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) (HMSO SI 2010 No.490)

The National Planning Policy Framework (July2021) can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>. Associated practice guidance (as continuously updated) can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

Appendix 1 – Adopted Local Development Documents

1. Local Plans

Unitary Development Plan for Wirral – Adopted February 2000

Written Statement - <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/unitary-development-plan/written>

Proposals Map - <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/unitary-development-plan/forward>

Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan – Adopted July 2013

Written Statement - <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/joint-waste-local-plan-merseyside>

Maps and Plans - <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/joint-waste-local-plan-merseyside>

2. Neighbourhood Development Plans

Devonshire Park Neighbourhood Plan - Made December 2015

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/devonshire-park>

Hoylake Neighbourhood Plan – Made December 2016

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/hoylake>

3. Statement of Community Involvement

Statement of Community Involvement - Adopted March 2021

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/community-involvement-local-planning/statement>

4. *Supplementary Planning Documents*

SPD1 – Designing for Development by Mobile Phone Operators – Adopted October 2006

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/designing>

SPD2 – Designing for Self-Contained Flat Development and Conversions – Adopted October 2006

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/designing-0>

SPD3 – Hot Food Takeaways, Restaurants, Cafes and Drinking Establishments – Adopted October 2006

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/hot-food>

SPD4 – Parking Standards - Adopted June 2007

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/parking>

Appendix 2 – Risk Assessment

Risk	Description	Control Measures
Political	Risk of political approval being withheld and/or change of leadership and/or direction and/or political priorities	<p>Consultation and involvement of Members in the Local Plan preparation process in order to provide ownership, leadership and commitment to future implementation. A Local Plan Member Working Group consisting of the Group Leaders, and Members of the Local Plan Sub Committee has been established to support the Local Plan process.</p> <p>Engagement with all Members at key stages of preparation.</p>
Procedural	Changes in national policy leads to amended requirements	Seek to future-proof requirements wherever possible. Any changes are regularly monitored, assessed and responded to ensuring that the Local Plan meets the statutory requirements.
Financial-constrained Council budgets, increases in Planning Inspectorate fees	Risk of inadequate financial provision hindering progress and scope of work required	The Local Plan is a corporate priority and budgetary provision has been made available to ensure that a robust Local Plan is delivered. Budgets are reviewed with the Director of Finance regularly and reviewed at each Local Plan Programme Board meeting.
Staff turnover and recruitment difficulties	Staff turnover is difficult to predict. Risk of loss of key staff to other employment would severely affect our ability to progress the Local Plan work programme in a timely manner	Take prompt action to fill vacancies with staff with the appropriate skills. Specialist support has been secured to support the Local Plan team and this is regularly monitored.

Risk	Description	Control Measures
Staff absence (e.g. long term sickness/maternity leave)	Reduced capacity causing slippage in programme	<p>Consider interim arrangements such as temporary appointments, use of agency staff or secondment, subject to resources</p> <p>The adequacy of staffing levels will be evaluated through the ongoing monitoring of the preparation of the Local Plan</p>
Lack of in-house skills for specialised areas of policy work/background studies	<p>Slow progress causing a slippage in programme</p> <p>Evidence base challenged or undermined</p> <p>Quality compromised</p>	<p>Obtain training for areas where expertise is lacking</p> <p>Review staffing requirements as part of annual service reviews</p> <p>Expand partnership working, where possible</p> <p>Specialist support has been brought in to support the Team.</p>
Appointed consultants fail to deliver against requirements set out in brief, either in terms of quality or timetable	<p>Slow progress causing a slippage in programme</p> <p>Evidence base challenged or undermined</p> <p>Quality compromised</p> <p>The consultant no longer has the capacity to deliver due to unforeseen capacity issues and or illness.</p>	<p>Check their capacity and ability to deliver before appointment</p> <p>Maintain ongoing monitoring of performance</p> <p>Where appropriate end the contract and appoint new consultant</p>

Risk	Description	Control Measures
Pressure on staff time due to competing work streams	Diverts team from Local Plan work causing slippage in programme	<p>The Local Plan is recognised as a corporate priority</p> <p>Team dedicated to the Local Plan</p>
Legal	<p>Risk of non-compliance with legal procedures and requirements and/or judicial review leading to adopted Local Plan being quashed and additional workloads</p> <p>Changes in plan-making requirements/procedures can also result in delays</p>	<p>Ensure relevant legislation/ regulations are checked and complied with at each stage</p> <p>It is not possible to easily plan for further changes to the planning system. The Council will endeavor to deal with new requirements with minimum disruption to the timetable as part of ongoing monitoring</p> <p>QC appointed in November 2018 and providing ongoing support.</p> <p>Programme Officer identified for Local Plan examination.</p> <p>Use Planning Advisory Service Local Plan Route Mapper Tool Kit</p>
Third Parties	Risk of comments and representations from third parties causing delay (including lengthening of examination) and/or additional expense from unexpected volumes and/or unforeseen issues arising, with need for additional evidence and/or consultation	<p>Consultation and involvement of relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Ensure timetable is realistic but has some flexibility built in and monitor progress against LDS</p> <p>Consider the need for additional resources as part of ongoing monitoring</p>

Risk	Description	Control Measures
Joint working with other internal departments and/or external authorities causes delay	Key milestones in programme not met Duty to Co-operate not met	Ensure timescales for Local Plan realistically reflect partner authorities ability to contribute to joint working Ensure commitment to milestone dates and resource allocation is obtained from relevant parties in advance
Capacity of the Planning Inspectorate	Examination and/or Inspectors Report is delayed Key milestones in programme not met	Close liaison with the Planning Inspectorate to ensure early warning of any problems The Council has sought to minimise the volume of issues to be resolved at examination, through ensuring a robust evidence base and wide pre-submission public consultation.
Soundness – Local Plan found unsound by Planning Inspectorate	Inspectors modifications required Local Plan cannot be adopted without significant additional work, possibly including repeated stages of preparation and consultation	Ensure Local Plan is legally compliant, founded on a robust evidence base, accompanied by appropriate assessments and appraisals and well-audited community and stakeholder engagement. Timetable allows for possible consultation on main modifications, if required. Use of Planning Advisory Service Local Plan Route Mapper -self-assessment toolkit Maintain awareness of best practice

Risk	Description	Control Measures
Ongoing impacts of the Covid 19 Pandemic	<p>National lockdowns and restrictions on ability of in-house and consultancy teams to work effectively together in office locations- resulting in delays</p> <p>Ongoing risk of illness of key staff resulting in delays</p>	<p>Follow latest Government and Public Health guidance on Covid19 working and meeting, social distancing arrangements.</p> <p>Where possible identify in-house or consultant temporary assistance for time critical work.</p>



ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 26 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	DISPOSAL OF INDUSTRIAL ESTATE AT QUARRYBANK STREET, BIRKENHEAD
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval for the disposal of Quarrybank Industrial Estate, Quarrybank Street, Birkenhead, a Council owned investment asset.

The Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents. The Plan has the following key themes:

- A thriving and inclusive economy, creating jobs and opportunities for all;
- A clean-energy, sustainable borough, leading the way in tackling the environment crisis;
- Brighter futures for all regardless of their background;
- Safe and pleasant communities that our residents are proud of; and
- Healthy and active lives for all, with the right care, at the right time.

The sale will support the Plan and its delivery through the generation of a capital receipt.

The matter affects the Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward.

This is a key decision as the likely receipt has the potential to exceed £500,000.

RECOMMENDATION

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is requested to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that:

- a) Quarrybank Industrial Estate, Quarrybank Street, Birkenhead be declared surplus to requirements; and
- b) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, to arrange for its disposal by auction and subsequent sale on the basis as set out in paragraph 3.3 of this this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

1.1 To meet targets for the generation of capital receipts from the sale of non-operational property assets.

1.2 The Council's Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting of 30 November 2021, amongst other matters, endorsed the recommendations of CIPFA's Local Government Finance Review in which included a recommendation to

“Identify asset disposals to offset the risk of increased council borrowing which could fund the repair and maintenance of existing council assets or the cost of the capitalisation direction or future potential regeneration projects.”

1.3 The proposals within this report are in furtherance of the implementation of the above recommendations.

1.4 The disposal will also remove any potential liabilities, including management obligations in respect of the property.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 The other option is for the Council to retain ownership of this property in order to continue to receive a rental income.

2.2 The property has been considered by the Council's Capital and Assets Group taking into account the Council's targets for the generation of capital receipts. The need to generate capital receipts is considered to be a priority, consequently disposal is the preferred option.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Quarrybank Industrial Estate comprises a site area of 3025sq.m (0.75 acre) and is located off Quarrybank Street, between Oxton Road and Borough Road, Birkenhead, shown in Appendix 1. The site was developed in the early 1980' with 16 single storey terraced industrial units, set out in three blocks around a communal parking area. The units vary in size between 500 and 1000 sq ft and 100% of the units are currently let and managed by the Council's Asset Management Section. The tenants are responsible for the maintenance of their individual units.

3.2 The majority of tenants have 6-year lease agreements with a 6-month option to break which causes fluctuations in the income received as units become vacant and are re-let. The break clauses enable small businesses to expand their operations if required.

3.3 In order to secure a sale in 2022 it is proposed that the property is sold by auction. This method of disposal has previously proved successful on two other similar disposals. The auctioneer has suggested a guide price for the disposal of this property in the range of £475,000- £525,000, although a reserve sale price will be set prior to the auction by the auctioneer, based on the level of interest generated.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The sale will generate a capital receipt as indicated in the report. The auctioneer has suggested a guide price for the disposal of this property in the range of £475,000-£525,000, although a reserve sale price will be set prior to the auction by the auctioneer, based on the level of interest generated. The actual sale price will only be established at the time of sale.
- 4.2 In disposing of the property the Council would forego the annual rent in lieu of the capital receipt which will be managed within the Regeneration and Place Budget Envelope. Over the previous three years the estate generated an average gross income of £56,892 per annum and an average net income of £53,291 per annum. Information obtained from the Council's Financial forecast budget figures indicates that the projected gross income for 2021-2022 is £63,750 and the projected net income for 2021-2022 is £58,477.
- 4.3 The auctioneer's costs will be paid by the purchaser. In addition, the purchaser will pay the Council 2% of the gavel price, with a minimum of £1,000 towards the Council's fees. If the property does not sell, no costs will be charged to the Council.
- 4.4 The receipt from the sale will contribute towards the capital receipts target contained within the current budget.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has a duty under of s123 of the LGA 1972 to ensure that the property is sold for a consideration not less than the best that can reasonably be obtained. Quarrybank Industrial Estate will be sold at auction after an extended marketing period to demonstrate market value.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Should the property sell at auction, it will remove any potential liabilities, including management obligations.
- 6.2 There are no IT or staffing implications arising from the disposal of this property. The asset implications are the subject of this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failure to conclude the sale will impact on the anticipated capital receipts programme.
- 7.2 When selling by auction a reserve sale price will be set based on the recommendation of the auctioneer. Should bidding not meet or better the reserve, the sale will not proceed. The Council will only be charged a fee if the sale is successful.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There are no consultation implications arising from the proposals set out within this report.
- 8.2 The auctioneer will undertake a promotional exercise to advertise the availability of the property at its auction, which will include promotion through its website and auction catalogue.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone.
- 9.2 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The sale of this property will not have any direct implications for the environment or climate.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The property is being sold as an investment asset and is likely to be operated as such by the purchaser, therefore the existing employers and employees should be unaffected. Future investment will allow more local development and hopefully the possibility of more local investment and job opportunities.

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APPENDICES

The PDF file below may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact sarahduncan@wirral.gov.uk if you would like this document in an accessible format.

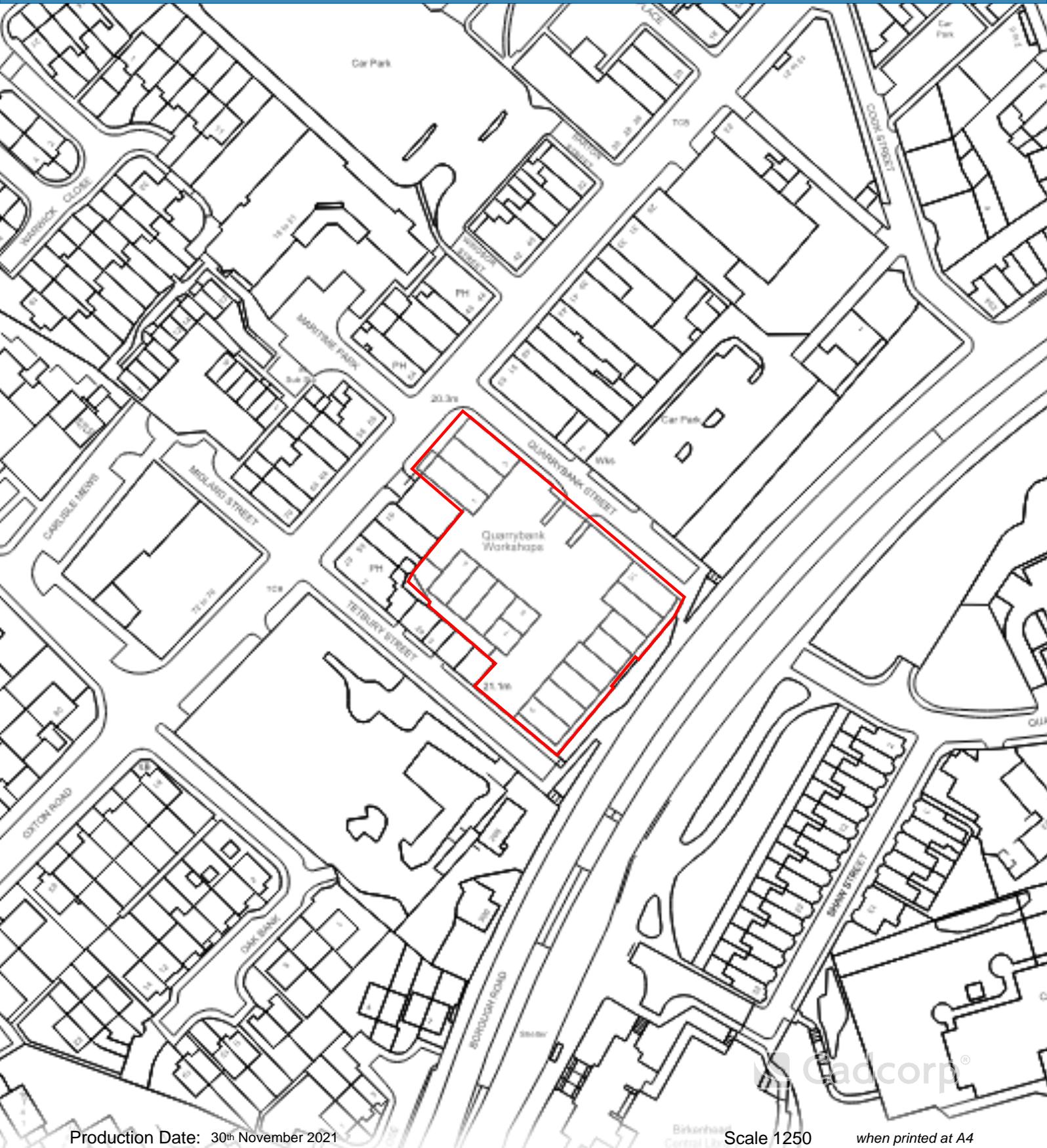
Appendix 1- Quarrybank Industrial Estate, Quarrybank Street, Birkenhead site plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Lease documents in respect of the various tenancies (exempt).

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Policy and Resources Committee	30 November 2021
Council	6 December 2021



Production Date: 30th November 2021

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ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 26 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	APPOINTMENT OF A PREFERRED DEVELOPER FOR THE NEW FERRY REGENERATION PLAN
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

In March 2017 an explosion in New Ferry devastated the heart of the retail centre, destroying businesses and homes, having a significant impact on the local community. Since that time, the Council has been fully supporting the recovery of the area, seeking additional funding to acquire the interests of key properties and parcels of land which will enable the regeneration and redevelopment of the town centre to proceed.

These acquisitions are crucial to the delivery of the New Ferry Regeneration Plan. This Plan was produced by the Council and consulted on in September 2017 and has led to a preferred development option being selected with the support of the community. The plan seeks to protect local businesses and bring a mix of new residential and retail units into the town to create a sustainable future for New Ferry.

Since Members first considered the regeneration plan proposals for New Ferry, a preferred development option has been endorsed by Leader Decision in December 2019. An outline planning application for the preferred development option was approved by the Council in September 2020. An updated viability assessment has been undertaken, which indicated that there are considerable viability issues and changes in demand for retail accommodation. In March 2021 Policy and Resources Committee resolved amongst other matters in respect of the New Ferry Regeneration Plan that

“...Economy, Development and Regeneration Committee be authorised to make all necessary further decisions that are not otherwise delegated to officers, in relation to the Compulsory Purchase Order and consequential on the Compulsory Purchase Order including the selection process for and approval of a development partner the structure of that partnership arrangement whether through a land transaction or otherwise and any related land transactions and settlement of compensation and the engagement of appropriate advisors to advise on compensation for any business interests”

A preferred developer partner needs to be appointed to deliver the scheme. It is anticipated that this will be delivered by 2025.

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the progress made regarding the procurement process for the appointment of a preferred developer in New Ferry and to make an award to the winning bidder.

The appointment will also involve financial support to the appointed preferred developer via a grant received as part of the Future High Street funding. This development funding is there to address viability issues within the scheme and to enable its development.

The matter affects the Bromborough Ward and is a Key Decision.

Appendix 3 to this report is exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that disclosing such information would reveal Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to approve that:

- (1) the tenderer set out within the exempt Appendix 3 to this report be appointed as preferred developer, being the highest scoring tenderer following conclusion of the competitive dialogue process (as outlined in the exempt Appendix 3) within the approved budget and in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tender criteria;
- (2) The Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place be delegated authority to enter into all associated legal agreements with the preferred developer so as to finalise and complete the development agreement and all other associated legal documentation for sites A, B and C, (as shown in Appendix 1 to this report) with the option to include any other appropriate land/development opportunities that are within the defined wider area, as shown in the attached plan (Appendix 2 to this report); and
- (3) The Director of Law and Governance be authorised to draft and agree an appropriate Grant Funding Agreement with the preferred developer, for pass through of the Future High Street Funds grant allocation for New Ferry and a Grant Funding Agreement for additional capital up to £2,590,265.53 on appropriate terms and conditions for the grant.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Council is committed to the regeneration of New Ferry. It endorsed the New Ferry preferred development option in December 2019. There are a series of critical strategic acquisitions of land and property that are required to implement and deliver the regeneration proposals that have been endorsed by the Council.
- 1.2 There is approved capital funding in place of £1m to acquire the interests of all the properties required for the redevelopment. A number of sites have already been acquired and negotiations with property owners have taken place over the last two years. However, for various reasons the acquisition of some of the remaining land and property interests cannot be acquired by agreement.
- 1.3 A number of the sites and properties in New Ferry are derelict and in a dilapidated state of repair. This is having a detrimental effect on the area and detracts from attracting new investment. The use of compulsory purchase order powers may be used to enable the Council to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well being of New Ferry.
- 1.4 Policy and Resources Committee in March 2021 gave approval for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 226(1)(a), and section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 for the acquisition of land and new rights in respect of the land within New Ferry to enable the regeneration of the area to be undertaken.
- 1.5 The strategic acquisition of various sites in New Ferry is necessary to deliver the preferred development option and of a suitable scale to make the development opportunity attractive and with financial assistance, which has been secured, commercially viable.
- 1.6 The redevelopment of New Ferry will support the delivery of good quality housing provision and contribute to the authority's house building targets which will meet local housing needs in the area. This in turn will make New Ferry a more desirable area. The influx of new residents has the potential to have a positive impact in terms of increased footfall and spend in the local centre.
- 1.7 The procurement process for the preferred developer has now been concluded, and a winning bidder has been identified. The appointment of a preferred developer will enable the regeneration and redevelopment plans for New Ferry to proceed. The redevelopment will deliver significant economic, physical, and social regeneration benefits for New Ferry. The completion of this development will contribute to creating a sustainable future for the town centre.
- 1.8 The redevelopment of New Ferry will support several of the key priorities in the Wirral Plan 2021-26. This includes an inclusive economy, a sustainable environment, and safe and pleasant communities.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council could decide not to continue the procurement process and not to appoint a preferred developer. However, the abandonment of the procurement process would not deliver the Council's strategic objectives or commitment to regenerating New Ferry. It would also be harmful to the Council's reputation, within the local community and the private sector.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council has been committed to regenerating New Ferry since the explosion that occurred in March 2017. As part of that process, a preferred development option was drawn up and endorsed by the Council in December 2019. The Council also authorised officers to commence a suitable procurement process to appoint a preferred development partner.
- 3.2 The Competitive Dialogue procedure was chosen because it is the most suitable procurement approach where there is a need for the buying organisation (the Council) to discuss aspects of the proposed solution with bidders. Its use is limited to particularly complex contracts where the council cannot define in absolute terms what its requirements are. It also allows for the bidder to introduce their own ideas and suggestions to the scheme's design and approach with the option of submitting a variant scheme.
- 3.3 The bid assessment team included staff from the Council's Special Project Team and Property consultant advisors from Avison Young Ltd. All aspects of the procurement process have been overseen by the council's procurement and legal team.
- 3.4 Following issue of the standard OJEU notice initiating the procurement procedure and preliminary assessment of outline bids, 3 bidders were selected to progress to the dialogue stage. One of these bidders decided to withdraw from the process prior to the competitive dialogue process beginning.
- 3.5 The remaining two bidders each participated in the dialogue process and submitted final bids for evaluation. All bidders indicated a preference to submit a revised scheme as the scheme for which the Council has already secured planning permission was in 2019 and prior to the Covid pandemic. On further analysis it was recognised that the Council endorsed scheme may not produce the best outcome for the area nor be a suitable viable option due to changes in demand and the current economic climate. Any revised scheme would need a successful application for planning permission.
- 3.6 The Invitation to Submit Final Tender was weighted 70% on quality and 30% on financial. The proportion of scores allocated to these categories was determined by the assessment team and informed by the objectives and aspirations of the Regeneration Master Plan that was completed for the area. The scoring and weightings were as follows:

Quality: Financial Split	No.	Criteria	Weighting for Final Tender Evaluation (ISFT Stage)
Quality: 70%	1	Scheme Design	30%
	2	Programme for Development and construction delivery	20%
	3	Affordable Housing	15%
	4	Marketing Strategy	5%
	5	Energy efficiency and environmental sustainability	10%
	6	Social Value	15 %
	7	Legal & Commercial	5%
Financial: 30%	8	Financial Proposals	100 %

3.7 On 10 December 2021, final tenders were received from both bidders. The bid assessment team analysed and scored the bids individually, before meeting on 16th December to agree a moderated score for the two submissions (Please refer to Appendix 3). The following scores were agreed by the panel:

Bidder	A	B
Score	67.29%	70.29%

3.8 The assessment is based on both qualitative and financial scoring. Some of the key attributes of the winning bid were:

- A 100% affordable housing led development, made up of 71 high quality residential units with a mixture of tenures. This consists of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties.
- A re-provided public car park that will be relocated to site B. (These works will be undertaken directly by the Council).
- Commitment to take on 5 Apprentices as part of the construction process and opportunities for local companies to become involved as sub-contractors.
- Community engagement programmes that will involve local schools and undertaking crime prevention initiatives in the local area.
- Incorporating a variety of environmental and sustainability measures into the new development.

3.9 The identity of the preferred developer is set out at Appendix 3 to this report. This is a well-established organisation with its own construction main contractor in place. Appendix 3 to this report is exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that disclosing such information would reveal Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council will be providing financial support to the developer through the Future High Street Fund grant that it has been awarded from Government. This is up to £2,590,265.53 to help facilitate viability on the development.

4.2 Additional council tax receipts will be generated as a result of the redevelopment plans being realised. Based on current council tax rates for the area, this is estimated at £98,000 per annum for the proposed scheme. This will provide the Council with future revenue income once the buildings have been completed and are being occupied.

4.3 The disposal of the land that is in Council ownership will generate a capital receipt to the Council based on a residual land value on completion. The details of the financial offers for site C, which is wholly in Council ownership are shown in Appendix 3. This is based on the proposed scheme that was submitted as part of their bid. However, the final figure will be determined by an appropriate cost appraisal/valuation of the final development on completion.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council has a duty to efficiently manage its assets and has wide powers to acquire, hold, appropriate, develop and dispose of land under Sections 120 – 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, Part 2 of the Housing Act 1985, the Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (amongst other powers). The disposal of the development sites (A, B, C and any other sites within the wider area), through this competitive procurement process is deemed to fully comply with this obligation and meets the Council's objectives for achieving best consideration reasonably obtainable for the land and promoting regeneration in the area.

5.2 The obligation to build will be secured through the development agreements. The ultimate development will depend on the outcome of future planning applications and the progression of a compulsory purchase order for the land that is not yet in Council ownership.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There will be no additional resource requirements for Council staff as the regeneration of New Ferry will be overseen by existing staff resources within the Special Projects Team.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The re-development plan will require a submission to the Local Planning Authority for approval of reserved matters pursuant to the extant outline planning permission. Alternatively, a fresh planning application may be merited. There is a risk in either case that such applications may not be approved. However, on-going discussions with planning officers indicate that the scheme would be acceptable.
- 7.2 There is a risk that the preferred developer and main contractor are not able to deliver the redevelopment plans. However, due diligence processes indicates that this risk is low and the developer and main contractor have a strong track record in delivering housing schemes across the north west.
- 7.3 All risks associated with the proposal will be identified and managed in line with the Corporate Risk Management Procedure as part of the project delivery process. Project Risks will be regularly reviewed by the project team.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The development of the New Ferry Regeneration Delivery Plan was subject to public consultation in September 2017 and January 2019.
- 8.2 Ward members and local residents have been kept informed and are supportive of the Regeneration plans for the area.
- 8.3 The preferred developer is fully committed to community engagement and has set out a number of community consultation events and proposals as part of the bid submission. Further consultation will also be carried out as part of the planning process for the scheme.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The Council is not aware of any significant equality and diversity implications arising from the proposals set out within this report
- 9.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been previously completed regarding the regeneration proposals for New Ferry. This is published on the Council website <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The redevelopment plans include environmental and energy efficiency measures that will be incorporated into the new buildings. These measures will contribute to the Council's aspirations to lower carbon emissions and meeting the target for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2041. The new homes at New Ferry

regeneration will be designed to at least a 30% reduction on carbon emissions from current regulations. This will include the following:

- A fabric first approach to reduce the developments carbon footprint and promote energy efficiency.
- The use of air source heat pumps for heating homes.
- Providing electric vehicle charging points for houses and apartments.
- The provision of cycle storage for apartments.
- It is anticipated of being able to achieve an EPC rating of B as a minimum, for all new homes.
- Photovoltaic solar panels to supply renewable energy were appropriate.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The redevelopment plans involve significant social value obligations that will be agreed with the developer that will benefit the local community. This includes the following:

- Four 2-week placements per year for local school leavers, college students, care leavers.
- Promoting traineeship opportunities to local 16-24 year olds.
- Creation of 5 apprenticeships as part of the construction process.
- Employing two local direct employees.
- Community engagement activities, such as site visits for local school children and consulting with the local community on the design proposals.
- Crime prevention measures, this includes incorporating secured by design measures as part of the development and working with the police and local community groups.
- Hosting 'Meet the buyer' events and encouraging local businesses to apply to become an approved sub-contractor or supplier.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Lee Parker**
Special Projects Team
email: leeparker@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Development Sites A, B and C
Appendix 2 Wider area plan
Appendix 3 Exempt - Scoring of submitted Tenders

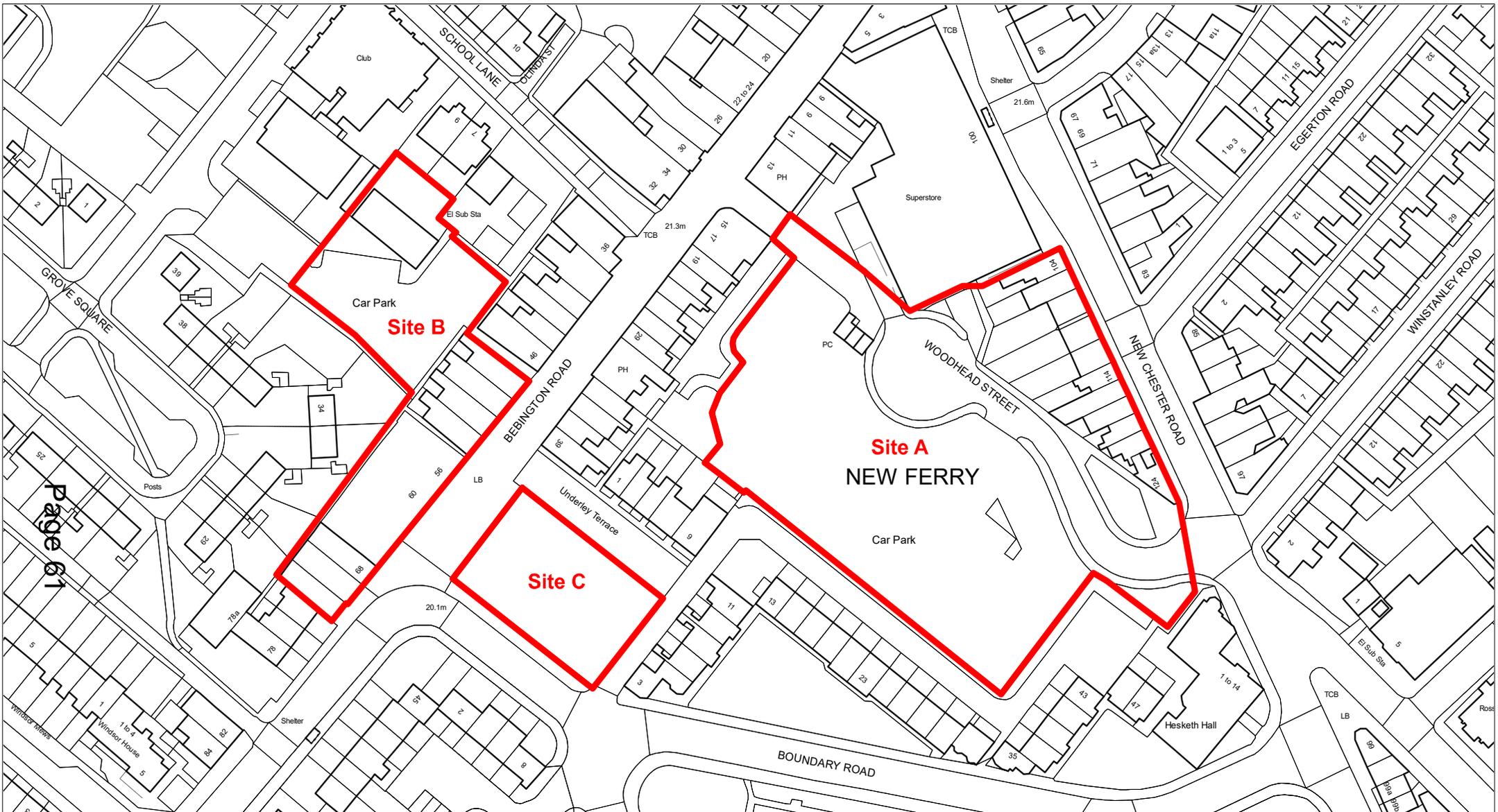
BACKGROUND PAPERS

Standard Selection Questionnaire (SQ) tender documents and submissions
Invitation to Submit Final Tender (ISFT) document and submissions

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee - New Ferry – Implementing the Regeneration Plan	17th March 2021
Economy Regeneration & Development Committee - New Ferry – Implementing the Regeneration Plan	4th March 2021
Delegated decision Report - Preferred Development Option for New Ferry	20th December 2019
Cabinet Report - New Ferry Regeneration Strategic Acquisitions	17th December 2018

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**New Ferry Regeneration Scheme
Wirral**

Scale:
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Date:
04.11.2021



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NEW FERRY

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ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 26 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	ACQUISITION OF FORMER CO-OP BUILDING - 100 NEW CHESTER ROAD, NEW FERRY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval for a recommendation to be made to Policy and Resources Committee for the purchase of the former Co-op building (“The Property”) in New Ferry as a strategic acquisition to support the delivery of the master plan for the area. The regeneration of the town centre is a priority for the Council following the explosion in March 2017.

The Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026 has been developed and the focus covers the following five themes:

- Safe & Pleasant Communities
- Brighter Futures
- Active and Healthy Lives
- Sustainable Environment
- Inclusive Economy

This proposal, and the wider regeneration New Ferry Regeneration programme, delivers against all of the above themes. Most specifically, it will contribute significantly towards the ambitions for a thriving and inclusive economy, creating jobs and opportunities for all.

This matter affects the Bromborough ward and is key decision being a proposal for expenditure in excess of £500,000.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee recommends to the Policy and Resources Committee that that the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to acquire the Co-op building in New Ferry, as shown on the plan, at a price of £700,000.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Co-op building (“the Property”) is situated at the heart of New Ferry district centre and therefore forms a key site in respect of enabling any future redevelopment of the area to take place. The Property is shown edged red on the plan at appendix 1. The plan identifies the property as fronting New Chester Road close to the junction with Bebington Road. The property also has a frontage on to Bebington Road with the Woodhead Street car park to the rear. This purchase is recommended as this Property is key to enabling the comprehensive regeneration of New Ferry which is a strategic priority for the Council.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Committee could decide not to acquire the Property. However, having regard to the lack of demand for retail property of that nature, the retraction of that market, the re-positioning of retail from physical stores to on-line shopping, it seems unlikely that the Property will return to retail use.
- 2.2 A search of other funding options has been undertaken but the Strategic Acquisitions Programme, is the only available source which has been identified.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council has consulted on the regeneration of New Ferry and has a masterplan in place and a preferred development option for the area. These propose a mix of small retail units and residential development across a range of sites in the area. These will be complimented by improvements to highway and public realm infrastructure in the area.
- 3.2 To achieve this ambition, the Council is currently acquiring (by agreement or using Compulsory Purchase Orders) a range of sites for future redevelopment. This is progressing well with a large number of properties now in council ownership.
- 3.3 The former Co-op building is at the centre of the retail area and ceased trading as a food retailer in 2016. It comprises of 1,881.29 sq metres of retail floorspace in a single storey unit on a site of 0.636 acres which dominates the retail centre. However, it separates rather than integrates the area, presenting blank gables to New Chester Road and the pedestrianized Bebington Road. The absence of active frontages creates a poor environment and is a detractor to the centre.
- 3.4 The Co-op have marketed the Property at an initial asking price of £1.25m but not attracted a buyer at that level. The vendor has recently reviewed the Property and determined that it has no future use for it. The vendor is now keen to dispose of its interest and reduced the asking price considerably. There are two tenants using a small part of the building. These are the Co-op funeral services and a local charity, but these operators remain in situ to defray security and business rates costs. It is envisaged that the site will be acquired with vacant possession. The owner has therefore approached the Council to see if there is interest in acquiring it to support the regeneration of the area. The vendor has accepted a provisional offer of

£700,000, subject to Board approval. They would like to complete within the next 8 weeks, so the acquisition will need to be completed in the financial year 2021/22 or else this regeneration opportunity may be lost. Lambert Smith Hampton, the Council's asset advisors have confirmed that the proposed acquisition price represents market value.

- 3.5 The acquisition and redevelopment of the Co-op building was originally included within the Council's bid to the Future High Street Fund (FHSF) in 2020. However, the funding that was awarded was subsequently reduced by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to approximately 70% of the original bid amount. This has meant that the intended projects have had to be scaled back and the acquisition of the Coop building could no longer be pursued using this funding.
- 3.6 The original proposal for redeveloping the Co-op building in the FHSF application involved the redevelopment of the site with 27 residential units and a small retail element.
- 3.7 The acquisition of the Property would enable the Council to remove a building of poor architectural merit that is predominately vacant with no likely future retail demand, from the retail centre. The acquisition will also enable the assembly of a larger redevelopment site (with the properties to the south and part of the Woodhead Street car park) and improve the "place" with better connectivity and higher quality of design. This would be beneficial for existing businesses and the local community. It will also provide an attractive opportunity for redevelopment, promoting future investment and residential use on this key site within the town centre.
- 3.8 There is another report on the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee for 26th January recommending a preferred developer for New Ferry. Acquisition of the Property would give the Council and appointed developer significant additional opportunities to redevelop the area for sustainable development.
- 3.9 Following consideration of this matter at the ERD Committee on 22 November 2021, the Council's independent property consultant has reviewed the Lambert Smith Hampton Valuation and advises that the acquisition of the COOP site will unlock the redevelopment potential of not only this site, but the adjacent car park land which is in Council ownership. The "marriage" of these two adjacent sites will enable a total of between 95 and 100 residential units to be provided, and this outcome fully justifies the acquisition price of the COOP in valuation terms.

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 was £30 million 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 This acquisition of the Property aligns with the Strategic Acquisition Programme criteria.
- 4.2 Costs related to items such as acquisition, demolition, insurances, security, loss of business rate income, Stamp Duty Land Tax have been included in the Full Business Case and it is proposed that these costs are met from the Strategic Acquisitions

Programme. The proposed purchase price is £700,000, Stamp Duty Land Tax is estimated at £24,500, the rates payable are projected at £90,000 per year but subject to deductions in 21/22 dependent upon vacant rates liabilities and demolition of the building (demolition costs are estimated to be £125,700). It is proposed that the property would be demolished as soon after purchase as possible, and is estimated to take four months. The property is currently occupied by The Phabulous Community Charity Trading Hub (Phab) to defray business rates and security costs, with a modest, unstaffed unit retained by the Co-op Funeral Services to provide appropriate advertising space for its services. As vacant possession will be provided upon completion of the acquisition, the vacant rates liability will pass to the Council. However, the proposal is to demolish the building as soon as possible after the acquisition.

- 4.3 The redevelopment of this site for mixed/residential use would provide the Council with future Council tax income from any new residential units that are built. The sale of the site to a developer could also generate a capital receipt for the Council.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has the power to buy land and assets to support regeneration.
- 5.2 Further legal due diligence and input is ongoing to inform the purchase of the Property including title investigation and conveyancing.
- 5.3 Lambert Smith Hampton has carried out a valuation of the Property and confirms that the proposed purchase price represents market value.

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 If the Property, given its strategic location, cannot be acquired on the terms reported it would significantly limit the Councils ability to redevelop and regenerate this part of New Ferry.
- 7.2 Redeveloping this site for residential purposes will use a brownfield site thereby helping to reduce the pressures for new housing to be built on Wirral's Greenbelt land.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 New Ferry ward members and the Member of Parliament for Wirral South support the acquisition of the Property as it will further the regeneration of the area for the local community and businesses.

8.2 The regeneration of New Ferry has a communications plan which keeps people advised of the progress through a variety of media. As the detailed site proposals emerge, public consultation will be undertaken.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be submitted as part of the preferred developer report later in the year demonstrating the positive impacts on equality.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The recommendations contained within this report will remove a vacant building and replace it with a mix of retail and residential units which will be designed and built to modern standards with a focus on carbon reduction and energy efficiency in line with the Council's policies.

10.2 The regeneration proposals for New Ferry are being taken forward in line with the Council's priorities on the environment and climate change. The report on the preferred developer, coming later in the year, will set these out in detail.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The acquisition and development of this property will enable the replacement of a property of low visual and commercial merit to be replaced with a new, wider development improving the area, creating new homes and jobs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Plan of the property

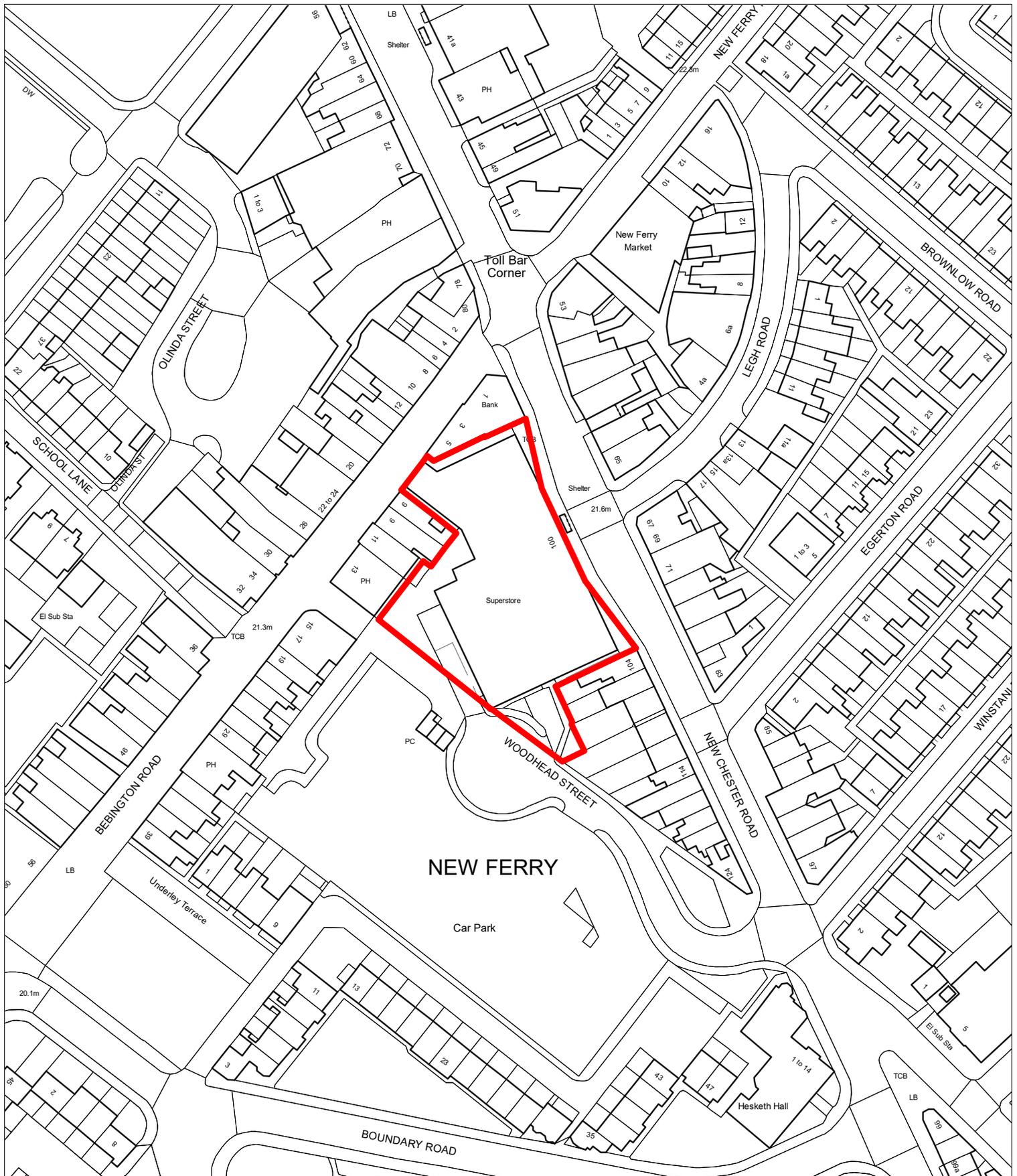
BACKGROUND PAPERS

Valuation advice from Lambert Smith Hampton
Negotiated heads of terms

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

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100 New Chester Road
 New Ferry
 Wirral
 CH62 5AG

Scale: 1:1250

Date: 22.09.2021



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ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

26th JANUARY 2022

REPORT TITLE:	SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT WORK PACKAGE 7
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to enter into a Deed of Variation to increase the existing Grant Funding Agreement for Sustainable Urban Development Work Package 6, to accept a further £2.89m funding package from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and to undertake appropriate consultation, procurement and appointment of a contractor to deliver 6.65km of walking and cycling infrastructure upgrades and 5.15ha of habitat improvements as part of Phase 1 of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) Green Sustainable Travel Corridors Programme.

The Deed of Variation for this new work package (WP7) totals £2,893,522, with £1,446,761 being provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and a further £1,446,761 from the LCRCA Transforming Cities Fund (TCF).

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Council’s vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan:

- A cleaner, greener borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the environmental emergency;
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations; and
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families.

The matter affects the Bidston and St. James, Birkenhead and Tranmere, and Seacombe wards.

This is a key decision owing to the significance in terms of the effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough, as well as being in excess of £500,000 in monetary value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to approve that:

- 1) A Deed of Variation be entered into by the Council to accept £2.89 million of funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to deliver 6.65 kilometres of walking and cycling infrastructure upgrades and 5.15 hectares of habitat improvements as part of Phase 1 of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan - the Sustainable Urban Development Green Sustainable Travel Corridors Programme;
- 2) Amendments be made to the individual phase programmes, if required, in consultation with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Chairs and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Development and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committees, having due regard to any issues that may arise during design or consultation stages of projects; and
- 3) The necessary procurement process to appoint external contractors to undertake the necessary highway works associated with Phase 1 of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan - the Sustainable Urban Development Green Sustainable Travel Corridors Programme to be carried out.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is a city region wide plan to develop a comprehensive cycling and walking network. Development of an LCWIP is a requirement of the Infrastructure Act 2015. Phase 1 of LCWIP is the Sustainable Urban Development Green Travel Corridors Programme. Work Package 7 (WP7) is the second Wirral element of the LCWIP Phase 1.
- 1.2 A new Local Transport Note (LTN1/20) was published by the Department of Transport setting out new standards for infrastructure design. LTN1/20 sets out five core design principles which represent the essential requirements to achieve more people travelling by cycle or on foot, based on best practice both internationally and across the UK. LTN1/20 set outs that networks and routes should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive.
- 1.3 WP7 will create walking and cycling links between the planned investment in Wirral Waters and Seacombe ferry terminal to the north, and Woodside ferry terminal to the south. The proposed routes will further improve accessibility for residents to Wirral Waters and increase the use of active sustainable travel modes, therefore reducing the reliance on the private car.
- 1.4 WP7 will support the Council by enabling access to significant funding to deliver active travel improvements and support the Council to address climate change. Improvements to active travel will support the sustainable regeneration of the Left Bank as identified in the emerging Local Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council could decide not to accept the WP7 funding and the Council could decline the grant of £2.89 million. This is not considered to be appropriate as delivery of active travel projects to support the regeneration of Birkenhead could not be progressed without external funding being secured. This would detrimentally impact the successful delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.2 The Council could seek to use the funding for alternative purposes. This is not an appropriate option as the funding has been awarded on the basis of the identified scheme and the funding could not be utilised for any alternative schemes.
- 2.3 Further scheme options around Wirral Waters have been considered as part of the development of the WP7 package. These phases were removed from the final WP7 package due to various considerations including:
 - Scheme designs being unable to achieve compliance with technical cycling design guidance LTN1/20;
 - Insufficient funding; and
 - Programme timeframe constraints.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In February 2020 the Leader of the Council gave approval for the Council to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement, to accept £1.22m in funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and to undertake appropriate land acquisition, consultation, procurement and appointment of a contractor to deliver a 3.7km strategic cycle route from Leasowe to Seacombe Ferry as part of Phase 1 of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan– the Sustainable Urban Development Green Sustainable Travel Corridors Programme.
- 3.2 The Green Sustainable Travel Corridors Programme funding focuses on delivering projects related to transport, sustainable urban mobility and green infrastructure. The funding allocation is split equally between European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transforming Cities Fund. The Managing Authority for ERDF in England is the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Transforming Cities Fund is managed by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The initial Wirral element of LCWIP Phase 1 (Work Programme 6 - Leasowe to Seacombe Ferry) is currently being delivered, with the Reeds Lane and Birket links now complete.
- 3.3 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has offered the Council the opportunity to secure a further £2.89 million of funding. The funding is offered on condition that all schemes are delivered, and monies claimed, by December 2022. It is 50% European Funding with 50% match funding required which, subject to final business case approval is being provided through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transforming Cities Fund .
- 3.4 WP7 will create walking and cycling links between the planned investment in Wirral Waters and Seacombe ferry terminal to the north, and Woodside ferry terminal to the south. This will improve accessibility for residents to Wirral Waters and increase the use of active sustainable travel modes, thereby reducing the reliance on the private car.
- 3.5 WP7 focuses on linking residential areas with specific areas of economic growth, education, skills and training and providing missing links in green corridors to facilitate a seamless and lower carbon 'end-to-end' journey. Seacombe ferry terminal is currently closed for major refurbishment work, which includes the construction of the new Eureka! Mersey visitor attraction, and the terminal is due to re-open in autumn 2022, in line with the opening of the tourist attraction. Woodside ferry terminal is currently providing commuter services to Pier Head, with onward links to Liverpool City Centre. River Explorer cruises will be offered following completion of refurbishment works.
- 3.6 As part of the EU funding guidance the project requires an element of Green Infrastructure. The output identified within the grant fund agreement is for 5.15 hectares of habitat improvements. The project also includes street trees to be planted along several sections.
- 3.7 The project comprises six phases, which are shown on the plan in Appendix 1:
- Phase A - Woodside to Four Bridges;
 - Phase B - Seacombe Riverside;

- Phase C - Birkenhead Road;
- Phase G - Northbank/Duke Street Connect;
- Phase I - PA6 Habitat Improvements; and
- Phase J – Price Street.

- 3.8 Phase A (Woodside to Four Bridges) will provide improved cycle route connectivity of the Wirral Circular Trail to the riverside, along Tower Wharf and Morpeth Wharf. The scheme will remove barriers to cyclists at the terminus of Morpeth Wharf, where cyclists are currently unable to transition from Morpeth Wharf to the riverside path, without dismounting. The Council is keen to support inclusive cycling and conscious that some cyclists are unable to dismount and walk/carry/wheel their bicycle. UK equality legislation applies to inclusive cycling and when developing a cycling or transport strategy, local authorities should seek to develop a network that is accessible to all. Further enhancements along this section include improvements to the existing footpath surfacing, lighting and signage alongside Egerton Dock and Morpeth Dock, and removal of overgrown planting along the riverside.
- 3.9 Phase B (Seacombe Riverside) proposes a traffic free route along the dock edge and riverside. This includes re-marking the existing marked public right of way to the northern boundary, away from the dock edge, between Birkenhead Road and the Alfred Dock inner lock gates. Further enhancements include improved surfacing and marking of crossing points, and a landscaped seating area created adjacent to Seacombe Ferry Terminal/Eureka! Mersey.
- 3.10 Phase C (Birkenhead Road) proposes a fully segregated scheme, which will provide an important connection between other existing and proposed walking and cycling facilities, including:
- The Wirral Promenade (providing a continuous off-road, shared route between Seacombe and Hoylake – some 15 kilometres in length);
 - The East Float (Dock Road) shared route between Tower Road and Duke Street; and
 - The proposed LCWIP route between New Brighton and Birkenhead.
- 3.11 Phase C will also restore an area of public realm, between Corbyn Street and Birkenhead Road, to form a pocket park for use as community space.
- 3.12 Phase G (North Bank/Duke Street Connect) will provide priority crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3.13 Phase I (Bidston Moss) is likely to be predominantly grassland habitat improvements to benefit invertebrates and pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. Improvements will be carried out through grassland management (5.15 Hectares) with scarification and over-seeding with wildflower mixes suitable to the site and ground conditions. Other interventions that will be considered may include:
- Changes to grassland cuts, with scarifying;
 - Native Wildflower seeding and cultivation;
 - Insect/Invertebrate boxes; and
 - Native Bulb planting.
- 3.14 Phase J (Price Street) proposes a series of high-quality modal filters between Beaufort Road and Rendell Street, to create a ‘Quiet Street’ environment.

- 3.15 In the development of the package other options were considered. Phase F (Canning Street) was removed from WP7 due to road widths being insufficient for a fully LTN 1/20 compliant scheme to be delivered. Phase D (Tower Road North) was removed from the work package due to the limited funding available. Phases E (Four Bridges) and Phase H (Duke Street Connectivity) were removed from the package due to the programme timescales. All the removed phases will be revisited as future funding opportunities arise..

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Under the proposals within this report the Council will receive £2,893,522 capital funding package from the Combined Authority to deliver the project. The funding profile will be agreed with the Combined Authority.
- 4.2 The project budget was based on estimates using rates from previously delivered schemes including an adjustment for risk. There is a risk that the cost of construction could exceed the amount received within the bid. Any cost overruns would be the responsibility of the Council. As with similar projects, this risk can be managed , if required, through value engineering and amendments to contract specifications. The project will be subject to comprehensive project management and governance processes as well as through contract specifications as part of the procurement process.
- 4.3 The project will be delivered via the Council's Design and Commissioning Service who will be responsible for the budget of the project and for maintaining the financial evidence for claiming funding from ERDF and from the Combined Authority.
- 4.4 Expanding the tree planting will increase long term maintenance costs; however, this needs to be considered within the context of place-making and the Council's 'A Greener Wirral – Wirral Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020-2030', which seeks to plant over 210,000 trees in ten years.
- 4.5 Land may need to be acquired or rights to use land for the purpose of the scheme may be needed on commercial terms. These can be authorised by subsequent decision and with best value secured.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The procurement process will be undertaken in accordance with the Public Procurement Regulations 2015 and in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 5.2 The Council will sign Deeds of Covenant with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ensuring that the infrastructure being funded will remain in place for a minimum of 20 years.
- 5.3 The Council has statutory duties as defined by the Highways Act 1980, Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, Road Traffic Act 1988, Local Government Act and the Traffic Management Act 2004. All schemes on the highway will require technical approval

by the Director of Neighbourhoods to ensure these statutory duties are complied with.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 Existing staff resources in the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Directorates will be used for the land negotiations, consultation and delivery of these schemes, supplemented by external specialist support where required. Progress will be reported to the Combined Authority's Programme Management Office as the accountable body. The delivery of the scheme will also be monitored through the Regeneration and Place Directorate Programme Management Officer.

6.2 Future revenue maintenance costs will be met from the Highway Maintenance Revenue Budget.

6.3 The Director of Law and Governance will support with transfer documentation and other agreements as necessary.

6.4 There are no ICT implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Council recognises that risk management is essential in good decision making and is a critical element of good governance. The Council continually develops its risk management processes to proactively and effectively manage risk. The Council has recently established a Project Management Office (dedicated to the Regeneration and Place Directorate. This will have oversight of the WP7 programme and will ensure that it is aligned with the Council's corporate policy to managing risk. A programme Risk Register has been developed. This will be updated throughout the programme lifecycle in order to assist the Council in identifying, controlling and managing risk.

7.2 Failure to sign a Deed of Variation in early 2022, will result in the Council losing £2.89 million of investment. As well as the financial implications, the Council would also incur significant reputational damage which may affect future funding applications.

7.3 The proposed Deed of Variation includes 5.15 hectares of habitat improvements at Bidston Moss. The Council is currently identifying the detail of this to be delivered on land which is part of the North West Community Woodlands. This risk is mitigated, as initial positive discussions have taken place and a letter of support has been received from Forestry England, which manages the site.

7.4 There is a risk of budget overspend; however, this will be managed via comprehensive project management and governance processes as well as through contract specifications as part of the procurement process. An adjustment for risk of 5% and construction contingency of 15% has been included within the estimates for each phase.

7.5 The route is 50% funded by the EU and will be subject to rigorous provision of evidence to ensure the funding can be drawn down by the Council. There is a risk

that if the correct procedures are not followed then this could mean that the Council would not be able to claim the full amount of EU funding and leave a funding gap. To ensure that the Council claims the full amount of grant available the project manager will ensure that the procurement is undertaken lawfully. The project manager will ensure that any sub-contractors will follow the correct procedures set out in the funding agreement and will liaise with finance colleagues to ensure that the financial evidence is in line with grant regulations. Any underspend from the Transforming Cities Fund element of the budget is required to be returned to the Combined Authority.

- 7.6 Phases A and B include some sections of the routes within land owned by Peel Ports. These sections are existing public rights of way and the Council is currently in negotiations with Peel Ports for both locations; however, mitigation measures have been put in place to reduce the Council's exposure to risk should these negotiations not be successful.
- 7.7 There is also a risk of objections being received to the schemes during the consultation process. Should objections be received it is proposed that these are considered by the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Chairs and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Development and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committees.
- 7.8 Failure to deliver an active travel scheme could be viewed negatively by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and could impact future funding allocations.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Wirral Council has a statutory consultation process that is required for the undertaking of work on the adopted highway which will require public consultation.
- 8.2 Consultations will be undertaken in accordance with the following guiding principles:
- It should be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage;
 - Must include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response;
 - Those consulted should be made aware of the factors that are of decisive relevance to the decision;
 - Adequate time should be given for consideration and response; and
 - The product of the consultation should be conscientiously taken into account by the decision makers in finalising their statutory proposals/ when the ultimate decision is taken.
- 8.3 The Wirral Active Travel Forum is a formally constituted group which meets quarterly with interested public and private organisations and individuals, to support active travel as a simple, low cost and effective way for people to access life opportunities whilst increasing levels of physical activity in their day-to-day life. Membership of this group is open to all and the forum will continue to be engaged as active travel programmes develop.

- 8.4 On 4th March 2021, the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee resolved to establish a Members Active Travel Working Group to support the work of Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee. The first meeting of this working group is due to take place in January 2022 and members of that group will be engaged as the WP7 programme develops.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The Council has an obligation under section 49 of the Equality Act 2010 and the to show due regard to the duty and show due regard to mitigate any negative impacts that may affect people with protected characteristics under the Act.
- 9.3 Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery may need to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge, where possible..

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The project will enable increased numbers of journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes, therefore reducing resident's reliance on the private car and reducing carbon emissions. Increasing cycling and walking will help combat climate change. By encouraging and enabling people to travel more on foot and by cycle instead of private car harmful emissions will be reduced. Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide, particulate matter and Carbon Dioxide helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 10.2 The project includes tree planting and therefore as well as contributing to the aesthetic appeal of the area the trees will contribute to carbon capture.
- 10.3 Gear Change Cycling Strategy produced by Government in Summer 2020 identifies that mode shift to active transport is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing transport emissions and that meeting the targets to double cycling and increasing walking would lead to savings of £567million annually from air quality alone and prevent 8.300 premature deaths each year in England and provide opportunity to improve green spaces and biodiversity.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Sustainable travel is at the heart of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Local Plan. In this context that WP7 it is part of a wider regeneration programme to deliver a prosperous, inclusive economy to benefit local residents.
- 11.2 The project supports the reduction in energy consumption as it will support the Cool 2 target of 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

11.3 Through any future procurement exercises we will be looking to maximise further social value activity through creation of local employment and training..

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 SUD Work Package 7 Site Location Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Plan 2021-2026

[Wirral Plan 2025 - Wirral Intelligence Service](#)

Gear Change Plan for Cycling and Walking – Department for Transport July 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

Birkenhead 2040 Framework

[Birkenhead 2040 Framework | www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk)

LTN1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf

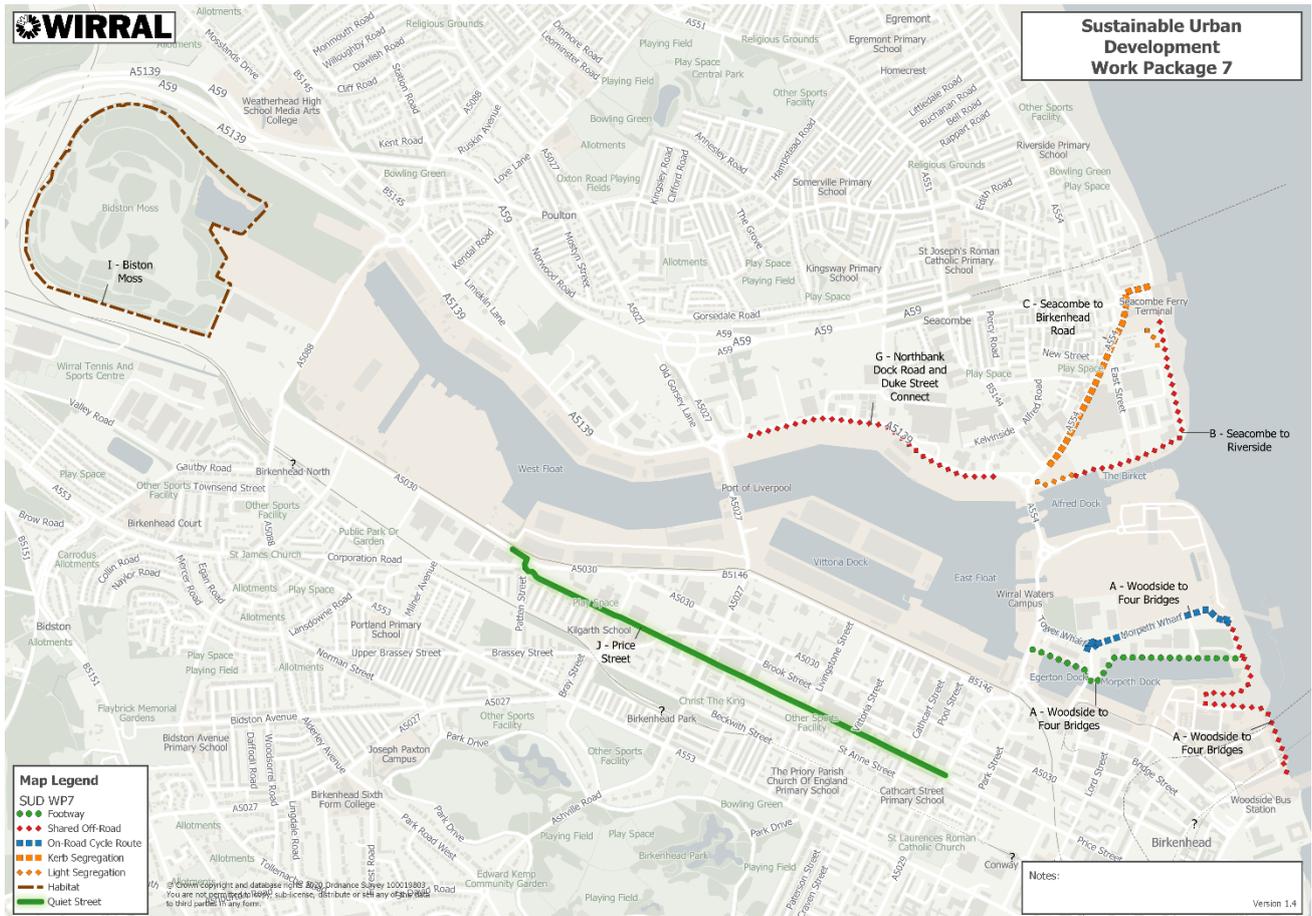
SUD ERDF Acceptance of Funding - LCR Combined Authority meeting 14th December 2018 – Agenda Item 114

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s34010/7%20-%20Sustainable%20Urban%20Development%20ERDF%20Bid.pdf>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Leader Decision - Liverpool City Region Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Phase 1: Green Travel Corridors Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) Leasowe To Seacombe Ferry	7 th February 2020

Appendix 1 – SUD WP7 Site Location Plan



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ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 26 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	2022/23 BUDGET UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The report provides for consideration of the recommendations of the Policy and Resources Committee in respect of the 2022/23 Budget Update. The associated Report of the Director of Resources to the Policy and Resources Committee is attached at appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to:

- 1) note and comment on the 2022/23 draft budget proposals.
- 2) authorise the relevant director with portfolio to take the necessary action to consult on any proposals that require additional consultation and take necessary action to deliver the resulting service changes in consultation with the Chair and Group Spokesperson or reporting to the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee as the Director considers appropriate.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To provide the opportunity for the Policy and Services Committees to provide feedback on the budget proposals for the Policy and Resources Committee to take into consideration in recommending a legal budget to Full Council at its meeting of 28 February 2022.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options have been considered as reported in the Policy and Resources Committee and appended report.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on Monday, 17 January 2021 will receive a report from the Director of Resources providing an updated position on the draft budget for 2022/23 and related statutory consultation. That report and associated appendices are appended to this report.

- 3.2 The budget proposals associated to Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee are detailed within section 3 of this report.

- 3.3 **PROPOSAL:** Capitalisation of Regeneration Staff Salaries

More about this option: Capitalisation of salaries will ensure the delivery of the council's regeneration and economic growth programme, which is recognised as a once in a generation opportunity to address decline in Birkenhead and other areas across Wirral.

Saving: £1.4m

- 3.4 **PROPOSAL:** The Closure of Nine Public Conveniences

More about this option: Due to increasing maintenance costs, this proposal will see the closure of public conveniences, located mainly in coastal areas, with sites including Harrison Drive, New Brighton; Moreton Common; Moreton Cross; West Kirby Marine Lake; West Kirby Concourse (outside); Parade Gardens, Hoylake; Meols Parade; New Ferry and Thornton Hough.

Saving: £143k

- 3.5 **PROPOSAL:** Corporate Buildings – Holding Costs

More about this option: Following changes in working arrangements due to the Covid pandemic, a number of council owned buildings are currently not in use, and it is proposed that a further review of them is undertaken, with savings anticipated from reduced utility costs, cleaning, materials etc.

Saving: £50k

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report is to ensure that a fully balanced legal budget can be recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee to Full Council at its meeting of 28 February 2022.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

1.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 As detailed in the appended report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Report to Policy and Resources Committee, 17 January 2022
Appendix 2 Detailed Draft 2022-23 Budget Position
Appendix 3 Briefing Note: Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23
Appendix 4 2022/23 Budget Setting Proposals Pack
Appendix 5 Full Budget Consultation report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pressure and Growth Business Cases
Savings and Income Business Cases

DLUHC External Assurance Reports

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	17 March 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	25 October 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	01 December 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	17 January 2022

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Monday, 17 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	2022/23 BUDGET UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES (S151 OFFICER)

REPORT SUMMARY

This report is part of the Council's formal budget process, as set out in the constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2022/23.

The Policy and Resources Committee on 25 October 2021 agreed to ask for the views of residents, businesses, and all those with a stake in the future of Wirral, about what council services matter to them most to help develop the budget plan. This consultation ran from 2 to 28 November 2021 and the outcomes are provided in this report.

At the Committee on 25 October 2021, and in line with the external assurance review recommendations to provide sensitivity analysis, three potential budget scenarios were presented as to what the budget gap could be for 2022/23. The rationale for the three scenarios was to present assumptions based on known information at the time in advance of the draft Local Government Finance Settlement being published and in advance of the compilation of proposals for pressures and growth items and savings and income for the 2022/23 budget.

The Draft Local Government Finance Settlement was published on 16 December 2021 and budget proposals have been developed in response to the previously outlined budget gap.

This report provides an updated position on the draft budget for 2022/23 and related statutory consultation. The final budget proposals will be presented to Policy & Resources Committee on 15 February 22 for recommendation to full Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Note the outcome of the draft Local Government Financial Settlement for 2022/23, in advance of the final Settlement which is due later in January 2022;
- (ii) Recognise, the extent of the Council's financial challenge and structural deficit, which needs to be eliminated;

(iii) Note the savings and income proposals that could address the 2022/23 budget gap;

(iv) Note the outcome of the November 2021 consultation;

(v) Consult on the draft budget for 2022-23, under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The scale of the financial challenge that the Council faces cannot be overstated. The Council has a structural deficit and this has been recognised in a request to DLUHC for the application of a capitalisation directive. The short-term support afforded by government in the form of a capitalisation directive does not extend beyond 2021/22, emphasising the need for focus and agility in balancing the Council's financial position.
- 1.2 The offer for capitalisation for the current financial year was subject to an external assurance review. The review focussed on the Council's financial position and on its ability, including the strength of its governance arrangements, to deliver its plans for medium-term sustainability. This process reinforces the requirement for an in-depth review of functions to enable considered and robust proposals to be made to Council in February 2022 for the 2022/23 budget.
- 1.3 Implementing proposals will require difficult decisions to ensure that a balanced budget can be presented. Regular Member engagement on the process is essential for effective budget formulation.
- 1.4 One component of the external assurance review recommendations set out the need to develop a financial recovery plan. Policy & Resources Committee approved the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at its meeting of 1 December 2021, which confirmed key principles the Council would follow in respect of its financial planning. The MTFS provides a robust, consistent, and sustainable approach to establishing and maintaining a stable and prudent financial basis on which the Council's services are to be delivered.
- 1.5 In order to fulfil the aims of the MTFS, it is imperative that proposals for budget options are evidence based and achievable. In order to ensure that this is the case, rigorous review has been undertaken through:
 - Directorate Management Teams (DMT)
 - Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
 - internal finance assurance review
 - external review via the engagement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and
 - Council Committees
- 1.6 This process of review and challenge is ongoing, to ensure that final proposals made to Policy & Resources Committee in February, for budget recommendation, are fully scrutinised and fit and proper in terms of readiness for decision-making. Contained within this report are all current proposals for consideration prior to the need to make decisions on how the budget for 2022/23 should be formulated.
- 1.7 Setting out potential budget proposals in this report ensures statutory consultation can be carried out in advance of setting the 2022/23 annual budget.
- 1.8 The information in this report also provides the opportunity for the Policy and Services Committees at their meetings in January 2022 to provide feedback on the

budget proposals for the Policy and Resources Committee to take into consideration in recommending a legal budget to Full Council at its meeting of 28 February 2022.

- 1.9 As part of the budget setting process, the Policy and Resources Committee is able to take into consideration the outcome of the November 2021 consultation with residents, businesses, and all those with a stake in the future of Wirral, about what council services matter to them most to help develop the budget plan.
- 1.10 This report ensures that the Policy and Resources Committee is provided with timely information on the latest budget position and the matters that affect the budget gap inclusive of outline proposals to address it.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The setting of a legal budget is a statutory requirement and therefore no other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 25 October three scenarios were presented as the potential budget gap for 2022/23. Members will be aware that the budget gap is an ever-moving target due to a number of factors:
 - Ongoing Government announcements of funding, including specifically at this time of year, the Chancellor's Autumn Statement
 - The continued scrutiny of growth and pressures to ensure values are evidenced based with no optimism bias
 - Addition of new pressures that continue to materialise as further local and national evidence comes to light
 - The continued further development of budget proposals
- 3.2 As a result, the budget scenarios presented in October have changed and with the publication of the draft Local Government Financial Settlement on 16 December 2021, the three scenarios have been consolidated into one, more robust, position. This position however is subject to further change ahead of formal budget setting activity.

2022/23 Budget Position

3.3 The 2022/23 budget position is currently as follows:

	Budget Position Reported in MTFS 1 Dec 21	Revised Budget Position	Change
	£m	£m	£m
Total Funding	-317.94	-330.57	-12.63
Initial Budget Requirement for 2022-23	329.40	329.40	0.00
Total one off savings from 2021-22	7.51	7.51	0.00
Total one off pressures from 2021-22	-14.06	-14.06	0.00
Total known pressures	31.64	27.45	-4.19
Initial Budget Gap	36.55	19.73	-16.81
Total savings options	-11.34	-20.31	-8.97
Revised Budget Gap	25.21	-0.58	-25.79

3.4 A more detailed analysis of this table can be found in Appendix 1.

3.5 In October 2021, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced information regarding the Spending Review in his Autumn Statement. The details of this have been provided in the Local Government Funding Settlement, received on 16 December 2021 and a summary briefing note is included in Appendix 2. It should be noted that the settlement is provisional at this stage and is open to consultation until the 13th January 2022. Following the closure of the consultation period the settlement is subject to Parliamentary approval, and as such the financial position outlined above is subject to change.

3.6 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 1 December, agreement was given to identify further budget proposals via a process of providing Directorate budget envelopes, after the original budget process, agreed in March 2021, failed to generate the level of savings required.

3.7 In November 2021, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published the two external assurance reports indicating areas the Council should give specific focus to. In response to the recommendations made in the assurance reports a peer-based improvement panel will convene in January when the information provided as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process will be reviewed.

3.8 The current set of budget proposals for the 2022/23 budget are included in Appendix 3.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report is part of a programme of activity to ensure that a fully balanced, legal budget can be recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee to Full Council at its meeting of 28 February 2022.

4.2 The programme to develop a robust budget position, which this paper forms part of, will support the Council in ensuring that CIPFA's Financial Management Code (FM Code) is complied with, in particular in relation to Section 4 of the FM Code – The Annual Budget.

4.3 The FM Code requires the Council to demonstrate that the processes they have in place satisfy the principles of good financial management, based on the following six principles:

- Organisational Leadership – demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisation culture.
- Accountability – based on Medium-Term Financial Planning, that derives the annual budget process supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.
- Financial management - undertaken with transparency at its core using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported frequently with evidence of periodic officer actions and elected member decision making.
- Professional standards - Adherence to professional standards is promoted by the leadership team and is evidenced.
- Assurance - sources of assurance are recognised as an effective tool mainstreamed into financial management, including political scrutiny and the results of external audit, internal audit and inspection.
- Sustainability - The long-term sustainability of local services is at the heart of all financial management processes and is evidenced by prudent use of public resources.

4.4 Delivering financial sustainability is vitally important for the Council. The Capitalisation directive requirements reinforce the need to develop a revised approach to sustainable service delivery resource planning. This is reflective of comments made by Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditor, who noted as part of their value for money review during the audit of the 2019/20 accounts, "We note that the capitalisation directive will only provide support to the Council for 2020/21 and 2021/22. As such, the Council needs to ensure that it delivers against its revised MTFs. It will need to put in place clear plans to reduce its future recurring service expenditure and move to a balanced revenue position that does not rely on reserves".

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a

statutory responsibility of the Council and, therefore, of this Committee in preparing that budget.

- 5.2 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. In doing so, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, proposals put forward as part of the budget process will have identified the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce the desired outcomes.
- 5.3 Consultation has taken place in respect of the priorities and views of the public in formulating the draft budget, as set out in this report.
- 5.4 Once the Committee has agreed a draft budget, which is the purpose of this report, there is then a requirement under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to conduct specific consultation with persons or bodies appearing to it to be representative of non-domestic ratepayers about the authority's proposals for expenditure (including capital expenditure) in the forthcoming financial year. The information required to be shared as part of the consultation is set out in the Non-Domestic Ratepayers (Consultation) Regulations 1992. This includes the authority's current estimates of the total of its revenue expenditure and the total of its expenditure for capital purposes for the forthcoming financial year (the draft budget).
- 5.5 It must be borne in mind that this is consultation on the budget proposals, not on the decision to take whatever decision is implied by the adoption of that budget.
- 5.6 The report sets out the relevant considerations for Members to consider during their deliberations and Members are reminded of the need to ignore irrelevant considerations. Members have a duty to seek to ensure that the Council acts lawfully and, where a service is provided pursuant to a statutory duty, it would not be lawful to fail to discharge it properly or abandon it, and where there is discretion as to how it is to be discharged, that discretion should be exercised reasonably. Members must not come to a decision which no reasonable authority could come to; balancing the nature, quality and level of services which they consider should be provided, against the costs of providing such services.
- 5.7 There is a particular requirement to take into consideration the Council's fiduciary duty and the public sector equality duty in coming to a decision.
- 5.8 Members are also individually reminded that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to the Council meeting on the budget and therefore arguably to the formulation of the Budget. Members who are two months or more in arrears with their Council Tax must declare this to the meeting and must not vote on budget recommendations, as to do otherwise can be a criminal offence.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The implications for staffing, ICT and Assets will be included within the individual savings proposals currently being developed by Directors and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget is dependent on a proactive approach due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the budget, albeit the best estimates available at the time, plus any amount of internal and external factors that could impact on the budget position in year. Examples of which are new legislation, increased demand, loss of income, increased funding, decreased funding, inability to recruit to posts, ongoing impact of the pandemic, etc.
- 7.2 A robust monitoring and management process for the budget is in place. If at any time during the year an adverse position is forecast, remedial action must be agreed and implemented immediately to ensure the budget can be brought back to balanced position.
- 7.3 Failure to achieve a balanced budget would lead to the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice and potential ministerial intervention under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999.
- 7.4 Funding and demand assumptions in particular can change as more information becomes available. As such, the Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) is regularly reviewed and updated as part of routine financial management.
- 7.5 Under the system of retained Business Rates, Authorities benefit from a share of any increased revenues but are liable for at least a share of any falls in income (subject to safety net triggers) and any non-collection. This includes reductions arising from appeals relating to past years which partially fall on the Authority. These risks are mitigated through a combination of the operation of the Collection Fund, General Fund Balances and a Business Rates Equalisation Reserve.
- 7.6 A balanced MTFP is fundamental in demonstrating robust and secure financial management. Delivering a balanced position requires continual review and revision of plans to allow alternative financial proposals to be developed and embedded in plans as situations change. A delay in agreeing these may put the timetable for setting the 2022/23 budget at risk and may result in a balanced budget not being identified in time for the deadline of 11 March 2022.
- 7.7 Assumptions have been made in the current budget outlook for income and funding from business rates and council tax and social care grants as the main sources of funding. If there is an adverse change to these assumptions as a result of the final funding settlement, additional savings proposals or reduced expenditure would need to be identified as soon as possible to ensure a balanced five-year MTFP.
- 7.8 Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly

monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/ CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Initial consultation has taken place to ask for the views of residents, businesses, and all those with a stake in the future of Wirral, about what council services and priorities matter to them most to help develop the 2022-23 budget. This process ran from 2 to 28 November 2021. The full report of the outcome to the consultation is included within Appendix 4.
- 8.2 Statutory budget consultation will commence subject to agreement by the Committee. This will take place in January 2022 and feedback will be taken into consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee when recommending a budget to Full Council at its meeting of 28 February 2022.
- 8.3 All Policy and Services Committees will have an opportunity to debate the draft 2022/23 budget publicly at the January 2022 Committees and feedback will be taken into consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee when recommending a budget to Full Council at its meeting of 28 February 2022.
- 8.4 The Council has engaged regularly with trade unions about the Council's financial position and response to the external assurance reports. This will continue throughout the budget setting process.
- 8.5 For budget proposals that may result in reductions to the workforce, the Council will consult with trade unions and relevant staff groups as required and in accordance with section 188(1A) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act (TULRCA) 1992.
- 8.6 The Council is committed to mitigating the impact on staff as far as possible and will take all steps possible to avoid any compulsory redundancies in accordance with policies and procedures.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The equality implications will be included within the individual savings proposals currently being developed and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval. Equality implications will be part of the decision-making process.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The environment and climate implications will be considered within the individual savings proposals currently being developed and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The community wealth implications will be considered within the individual savings proposals currently being developed. The budget proposals under consideration will take account of related matters across headings such as the following:

- Progressive Procurement and Social Value How we commission and procure goods and services. Encouraging contractors to deliver more benefits for the local area, such as good jobs, apprenticeship, training & skills opportunities, real living wage, minimising their environmental impact, and greater wellbeing.
- More local & community ownership of the economy Supporting more cooperatives and community businesses. Enabling greater opportunities for local businesses. Building on the experience of partnership working with voluntary, community and faith groups during the pandemic to further develop this sector.
- Decent and Fair Employment Paying all employees a fair and reasonable wage.
- Making wealth work for local places

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Detailed Draft 2022-23 Budget Position

Appendix 2: Briefing Note: Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23

Appendix 3: 2022/23 Budget Setting Proposals Pack

Appendix 4: Full Budget Consultation report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pressure and Growth Business Cases

Savings and Income Business Cases

DLUHC External Assurance Reports

CIPFA's Financial Management Code

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	17 March 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	25 October 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	30 November 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	01 December 2021

APPENDIX 1: Detailed Draft 2022-23 Budget Position

	Budget Position Reported in MTFS 1 Dec 21 £m	Revised Budget Position £m	Change £m
FUNDING			
Business Rates			
Business Rates base	-72.30	-72.30	0.00
Inflation	-1.16	-1.16	0.00
Properties	-0.14	-0.14	0.00
Section 31 Grant	-11.67	-11.67	0.00
Top up Grant	-34.30	-35.05	-0.75
BCF	-18.80	-19.24	-0.44
Council Tax			
Council Tax Base	-156.70	-156.70	0.00
Additional Properties	-0.57	-0.57	0.00
Inflation	-3.15	-3.15	0.00
Adult Social Care Precept	-1.58	-1.58	0.00
Other			
Collection Fund (surplus) / deficit	4.04	4.04	0.00
Local Council Tax Support Grant	-2.56	-2.56	0.00
NI reimbursement Grant	-1.44	0.00	1.44
New Homes Bonus	-0.07	-0.44	-0.37
Social Care Grant	-14.60	-19.77	-5.17
Lower Tier Funding	0.00	-0.51	-0.51
Capital Receipts	-2.93	-2.93	0.00
Capitalisation Directive	0.00	0.00	0.00
2022/23 Services Grant	0.00	-5.62	-5.62
Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund	0.00	-1.22	-1.22
TOTAL FUNDING	-317.94	-330.57	-12.63

	Budget Position Reported in MTFS 1 Dec 21 £m	Revised Budget Position £m	Change £m
EXPENDITURE			
INITIAL BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR 2022/23	329.40	329.40	0.00
Removal of one-off items from 21/22:			
Total one off savings from 21/22	7.51	7.51	0.00
Total one off pressures from 21/22	-14.06	-14.06	0.00
REVISED BUDGET GAP	4.91	-7.72	-12.63
ADD KNOWN PRESSURES/ GROWTH	31.64	27.45	-4.19
REVISED BUDGET GAP	36.55	19.73	-16.81
DEDUCT PROPOSED SAVINGS			
Adult Care & Health	-4.00	-3.89	0.11
Children, Young People & Education	-1.89	-3.15	-1.27
Neighbourhoods	-0.77	-6.28	-5.51
Regeneration & Place	-0.08	-1.93	-1.85
Resources	-1.10	-4.23	-3.13
Law & Governance	-0.20	-0.73	-0.53
Corporate	-3.31	-0.11	3.20
Total Proposed Savings	-11.34	-20.31	-8.97
REVISED BUDGET GAP	25.21	-0.58	-25.79

APPENDIX 2: Briefing Note: Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This briefing note outlines the government's announcement and subsequent publications on 16th December 2021 concerning the Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23 and gives an analysis on the impact on Wirral Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), although as noted below all data is provisional at this stage.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 27th October 2021 the government announced The Spending Review, which set out the Government's spending plans for each government department for the next three financial years, including local government and its agenda on "levelling up".

Following this, on 16th December 2021 the Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23 was announced, with impacts on Core Spending Power for 2022/23, Social Care Grant allocations as well as other grant details. The settlement was for a single year only, to give the government time to work with the sector and assess how it will share out resources fairly in future years.

At the same time, a consultation related to the settlement proposals was launched, which runs for 4 weeks and concludes on 13th January 2023.

3.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT HEADLINES

3.1 Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power is a measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available to local authorities (assuming full Council Tax increase) through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The headline announcement was that an additional £3.5 billion of funding would be "made available" to councils, representing a 4% real terms increase. This includes an additional £1.5 billion of the £1.6 billion announced grant funding and the first of the promised support from Department of Health to support Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care.

It was again undertaken that no Council would suffer a cash terms cut in core spending power. The main sources of the funding are:

ENGLAND	2021-22	Provisional 2022-23	Change 22-23	Change 22-23
	£ million	£ million	£ million	%
Settlement Funding Assessment	14,809.7	14,882.2	72.5	{
Compensation for under-indexing the business rates multiplier	650.0	1,025.1	375.1	{ 2.9
Council Tax Requirement excluding parish precepts	30,326.9	31,728.5	1,401.6	4.6
Improved Better Care Fund	2,077.0	2,139.8	62.8	3.0
New Homes Bonus	622.3	554.5	-67.8	-10.9
Rural Services Delivery Grant	85.0	85.0	0	0
Social Care Grant ²	1,710.0	2,346.4	636.4	37.2
2022/23 Services Grant	0	822.0	822.0	0
Market sustainability and Fair Cost of Care	0	162.0	162.0	0
Lower Tiers Services Grant	111.0	111.0	0	0
Core Spending Power	50,391.9	53,856.5	3,464.6	6.9

3.2 Council Tax

The Council Tax proposals set out in the Spending Review 2021 in October were confirmed as part of the settlement. The proposal for core Council Tax in 2022/23 is therefore to continue a referendum cap of up to 2%.

There is also the flexibility to add up to a further 1% adult social care precept for authorities providing adult social care services. This can be enhanced by up to 3% of the permitted Social Care Precept increase from 2021-22 where not already utilised.

A £5 flexibility is proposed for district councils, a £10 flexibility is proposed for Police and Crime Commissioners and a flexibility of £5 for the 8 lowest charging fire and rescue authorities. No referendum limit is proposed for Mayoral Combined Authorities in 2022-23 and Government has deferred its decision to impose a referendum limit on Town and Parish Councils.

3.3 Improved Better Care Fund

Improved Better Care fund grows by 3% for all upper tier councils.

3.4 Social Care Grant

Social Care Grant will increase by £636m from £1,710m to £2,364m in 2022/23. The basis for allocating the additional £636m is as follows:

- £556 million is based on existing formula i.e., distributed using the adult social care relative needs formula.
- £80 million is to equalise the different abilities of councils to raise social care precept.

3.5 Lower Tier Services Grant

Introduced in 2021/22, the Lower Tier Services Grant was assumed to be one-off funding for the current financial year only. However, it has been retained for

2022/23 and remains unchanged in cash terms at £111m, although the distribution to Local Authorities has been recalculated.

3.6 New Homes Bonus

The government has decided to maintain the current approach to the NHB payments in 2022/23. There will be no legacy (i.e., second) payment for 2021-22 years' NHB meaning 2022-23 payment therefore consists of 2019-20 legacy and 2022-23 estimate, resulting in a 10.9% reduction in the overall grant.

3.7 2022/23 Services Grant

A new 2022/23 Services Grant was announced giving Local Authorities £822m nationally. This grant is explicitly noted as a one-off grant and will in future likely contribute towards transition funding in the future as the government intended to take steps towards the introduction of Fair Funding in later years.

3.8 Public Health Grant

Information on the Public Health grant is not yet available and is expected in the new year.

3.8 Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund

To further support the government's proposals for making specific funding available for social care services, along with Better Care Fund and Social Care Grant, the Department for Health and Social Care's Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund is included within Core Spending Power in 2022/23.

Totalling £162m nationally, this fund is to support Local Authorities prepare their markets for reform and move towards paying providers a fair cost of care and is to be allocated using the government's existing Adult Social Care Relative Need Formula, in line with the Social Care Grant.

4.0 WIRRAL COUNCIL IMPACT

4.1 Council Tax

The confirmation of the 2% core referendum principal means an increase in Council Tax income of approximately £3.1m as reported as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at Policy & Resources Committee on 1st December 2021.

Similarly, a 1% Council Tax precept for Adult Social Care would generate an additional £1.6m as reported within the MTFS. Both these figures are subject to confirmation of the Council Tax Base figure for 2022/23, which is due to be reported to Policy and Resources in January 2022.

4.2 Social Care Grant

Provisional allocations of the ringfenced Social Care Grant indicate that Wirral will receive £19.8m in 2022/23, which is an increase of £5.2m compared with the 2021/22 budget and the 2022/23 assumption in the MTFS reported to Policy & Resources. Based upon this allocation, the resources have been proportioned across Adults and Children's Services to limit the requirement to make additional savings in those statutory services.

4.3 **Lower Tier Services Grant**

It had previously been assumed that the Lower Tier Services grant was for one year only in 2021/22. However, confirmation of its continuation in 2022/23 means a £0.5m improvement compared with MTFs assumptions.

4.4 **New Homes Bonus**

It had previously been assumed that the New Homes Bonus grant was coming to an end with just a legacy payment of £0.074m due in 2022/23. However, the government has decided to maintain the current approach to the NHB payments in 2022/23. Provisional allocations indicate Wirral will receive £0.4m in 2022/23, an increase of £0.36m against previous assumptions.

4.5 **2022/23 Services Grant**

Provisional allocations indicate Wirral will receive £5.6m from this new grant, which was not included in previous assumptions as a standalone grant. However, as well as providing funding to all tiers of local government in recognition of the vital services, including social care, delivered at every level of local government, this grant includes funding for local government costs for the increase in employer National Insurance Contributions which Wirral had previously assumed would be received as a separate grant of £1.4m, meaning the provisional allocation is £4.2m better off against previous assumptions.

4.6 **Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund**

Early indications are that Wirral will receive approximately £1.2m for this funding, although any detailed conditions and allocation tables are not expected until early in 2022. This has been allocated to Adult Social Services, pending additional guidance and implications.

4.7 **Business Rates**

The settlement confirmed that the 100% Business Rates Retention pilot that Wirral participates in alongside Liverpool City Region authorities will continue in 2022/23. Although this was already assumed in the MTFs, this is positive news as Wirral benefits by approximately £7m per year as a result of participating in the pilot.

The latest assumptions were that the Business Rates Top-up would remain unchanged from 2021/22 at £53.1m. However, the provisional settlement indicates this will increase to £54.3m, an improvement of £1.2m.

4.8 Included within this increase is a 3% BCF increase of £0.44m to support integrated working across Adults, Children's, Public Health and NHS.

4.9 **Dedicated Schools Grant**

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations were also published by the Department for Education (DfE) on 16th December 2021. Although this is ringfenced education funding and therefore has no impact on the MTFs, Wirral's indicative allocation for 2022/23 is £313.5m, a £10.9m (3.6%) increase from the current 2021/22 estimate.

- 4.10 In total, the provisional impact on the Wirral MTFS is an improvement of £12.6m. The following table summarises the impact of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on Wirral Council's MTFS:

	2021/22 Budget £m	2022/23		
		MTFS assumption (P&R 01/12/21) £m	Provisional settlement £m	MTFS Impact £m
Business Rates Top-Up	-53.10	-53.10	-54.29	-1.19
SC NI levy reimbursement	0.00	-1.44	0.00	-1.44
New Homes Bonus	-0.20	-0.07	-0.44	-0.36
Social Care Grant	-14.60	-14.60	-19.77	-5.17
Lower Tier Funding	-0.50	0.00	-0.51	-0.51
2022/23 Services Grant	0.00	0.00	-5.62	-5.62
Market Sustainability & Fair Cost of Care Fund	0.00	0.00	-1.22	-1.22
Total provisional 2022/23 MTFS impact				-12.62

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 While the settlement brought positive news for Wirral as well as the Local Government sector in general, the data outlined in this briefing note should be treated with caution.
- 5.2 Firstly the settlement is provisional at this stage, and as noted is open to consultation until the 13th January 2022. Following the closure of the consultation period the settlement is subject to Parliament approve, and as such the data outlined above is subject to change.
- 5.3 Guidance on Business Rates for 2022/23 is still to be released. The estimated income generated from Business Rates for 2022/23, as well as the related Section 31 Grants for qualifying reliefs, will be analysed in detail in conjunction with the guidance when available. Such estimates have a deadline for completion and submission to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of 31st January 2022, and as such the impact of Business Rates income on the MTFS is not yet clear.
- 5.4 Similarly, the estimate of the Collection Fund position will impact the 2022/23 budget. This is a statutory process and is based on the latest data available on 15th January 2022 and therefore this will not be known until late January.
- 5.5 Finally, while the provisional settlement brings positive news for Wirral Council it is important to remember that, despite the three-year Spending Review period, the government have only impacted a single -year settlement. While the additional resources for 2022/23 are welcomed, they only provide limited and short-term stability while creating uncertainty for longer term financial planning.

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2022/2023 BUDGET SETTING Proposals Pack



Children's Services

Wirral's Children's Services are focussed on breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and encouraging and enabling families to bring up children in safe, happy, and secure environments. Its functions include:

- Assessment and Intervention
- Children's Business Support
- Early Childhood Services
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Fostering, Adoption and Placement Commissioning
- Integrated Front Door
- Modernisation
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Performance Improvement
- Permanence
- Safeguarding QA and Practice Improvement
- SEND and Inclusion
- Schools Improvement
- Youth Service

PROPOSAL: Reduction of Historic Teachers Pensions Costs

More about this option: The council is responsible for the costs of additional benefits awarded to teachers upon early retirement outside of the terms of the Teachers' Pension Scheme. This is a legacy financial commitment where the cost is reducing over time and can be achieved through a simple budget reduction.

Saving: £200k

PROPOSAL: Alternative Accommodation Provision for Children Looked After

More about this option: In order to reduce costs associated with external accommodation providers, the council plans to partner with a Community Interest Company to open four children's homes for up to 16 young people over the next 2 years. Provision will include short-breaks, therapeutic provision for children and young people with learning disability/autism and mental health difficulties and expanding in-house provision at Willowtree for young people with disabilities. A registered housing provider will also be commissioned to offer care leaver accommodation.

Saving: £1m

PROPOSAL: Utilisation of Demand Reserve

More about this option: This proposal is focused on service demand. A long-term saving will involve an alternative delivery model based on the Department for Education's Family Safeguarding model. In the meantime, COVID funding will deliver the savings until the permanent model is in place.

Saving: £467k

PROPOSAL: Children's Services redesign and posts deletion/closure

More about this option: This proposal will look to achieve efficiencies within the Directorate through removal of vacant posts, redeployment, and service realignment.

Saving: £294k

PROPOSAL: Reduction in Adoption Orders.

More about this option: Wirral had a disproportionately high number of adoption orders in 2017/18 and 2018/19. This has impacted on the budget which funds the service via the Regional Adoption Agency. The funding formula for the regional adoption agency is currently based on the average number of adoption orders for the previous four years. As these adoption order numbers pass out of the formula calculation over the next two years, Wirral's contribution to the regional adoption agency will reduce.

Saving: 2022/23: £50k 2023/24: £150k

PROPOSAL: Reduction in the Number of Looked After Children

More about this option: In recent years, the overall children looked after (CLA) numbers in Wirral were higher than statistical neighbours. The numbers coming into care presently are more in line with neighbours. The cohort of children who joined during the earlier period are likely to remain in care until age 18, but as these pre-2019 children reach 18 we anticipate our CLA spending will reduce annually.

Saving: £564k (22/23)

PROPOSAL: Review of Youth Offending Service

More about this option: This proposal includes the removal of a post from the Youth Offending Service structure which is no longer required.

Wirral's Youth Justice Service produces an Annual Strategic Plan which is approved by the Youth Justice Management Board and Council. The plan sets out the priorities and action for future delivery. It is anticipated that the service can continue to meet its statutory responsibilities and prevention approach without the additional post.

Saving: £25k

PROPOSAL: Special Educational Needs (SEND) Transport Review

More about this option: This option will include a service redesign which will look to reduce costs in home to school transport for children with SEND. The review will include changes to timings and routes, multiple drop offs, vehicle sharing and eligibility post 16.

Saving: £150k

PROPOSAL: Increase Funding for Placements from Health Clinical Commissioning Group and SEND

More about this option: Social Care currently contributes the majority of funding (90%) towards residential placements whilst education contribute 4.45% and health 5.27% (as of April 2021). This proposal is seeking a more equal distribution of funding which will help secure this saving.

Saving: £200k

PROPOSAL: Redesign of Youth Offer

More about this option: This proposal will seek to achieve savings through a review of current budgets and resource. It will include withdrawal of £150k from the Hive (in addition to the £200k withdrawn last year 2020/21), the removal of £108k from the Youth Service budget and deletion of one post from the Youth Service.

In 22/23 the Hive will continue to receive a £100k contribution from local developers.

Saving: £200k

Regeneration

This Directorate is leading Wirral Council on its hugely ambitious regeneration of the borough, and plays a significant role in promoting housing supply, providing wider place-based regeneration and local growth, and supporting cohesive communities. Its functions include:

- Assets and Facilities Management
- Culture strategy and Visitor Economy
- Development Management and Building Control
- Housing, Supported housing and homelessness services
- Major Planning and projects including Wirral Growth Company
- Inward investment
- Regeneration
- Strategic Transport

PROPOSAL: Capitalisation of Regeneration Staff Salaries

More about this option: Capitalisation of salaries will ensure the delivery of the council's regeneration and economic growth programme, which is recognised as a once in a generation opportunity to address decline in Birkenhead and other areas across Wirral.

Saving: £1.4m

PROPOSAL: Cease Financial Contributions for the Provision of Community Alarms and Response Calls

More about this option: It is proposed the council will cease the grant funding contribution to current eligible customers for the community alarm/response services charges. Notice will be given to the providers of this funding being withdrawn in line with current funding regime and agreement notice period. Registered providers will then each undertake their own review of the service provided to see how this would be managed with their residents.

Saving: £200k (22-23) £100k (23/24)

PROPOSAL: Reconfiguration of Commissioned Homeless Accommodation

More about this option: The homeless accommodation scheme in its current configuration is not fully meeting the demands being seen coming through the council's housing options system. In partnership with service providers, we will look to reconfigure the service, adjusting parameters, including age restrictions, in order to meet demand and cater for wider client groups. Changes would result in the service having the ability to apply for intensive housing management eligible costs, thereby releasing the expenditure the council currently provides as part of a commissioned service.

Saving: £115k (22/23) £37k (23/24)

PROPOSAL: The Closure of Nine Public Conveniences

More about this option: Due to increasing maintenance costs, this proposal will see the closure of public conveniences, located mainly in coastal areas, with sites including Harrison Drive, New Brighton; Moreton Common; Moreton Cross; West Kirby Marine Lake; West Kirby Concourse (outside); Parade Gardens, Hoylake; Meols Parade; New Ferry and Thornton Hough.

Saving: £143k

PROPOSAL: Corporate Buildings – Holding Costs

More about this option: Following changes in working arrangements due to the Covid pandemic, a number of council owned buildings are currently not in use, and it is proposed that a further review of them is undertaken, with savings anticipated from reduced utility costs, cleaning, materials etc.

Saving: £50k

Law and Governance

The core business of this department is to provide corporate and operational legal advice, assistance and support to the authority and its members, as well as responsibility for the co-ordination and efficient management of the decision-making processes of the Council. Its functions include:

- Civic Services
- Committee Services
- Coroners
- Electoral
- Legal Services
- Licensing
- Registrars
- Scrutiny

PROPOSAL: Removal of Individual Member Budgets

More about this option: In order to set a balanced budget for the 2021/22 budget year, the council had agreed to limit the budget to £1,000 per member with a view to the budget being reintroduced for 2022/23. However, given the current budget savings requirement that the council must meet to set a balanced budget, it is proposed that this budget now be removed altogether.

Saving: £250k

PROPOSAL: Reduction in the Number of Committees

More about this option: The current re-design of the council's committee structure will be accompanied by a re-design of the staffing requirement to support the number of meetings, members, and officers in the decision-making process.

Saving: £150k

PROPOSAL: Capitalise Salaries

More about this option: This proposal will include a change to re-direct qualifying legal services salaries away from the council's central budget to specific capital projects, which will enable a saving on net revenue costs.

This type of expenditure is not considered to be a council overhead but a direct cost necessary to achieve a project or programme of projects.

Saving: £200k

PROPOSAL: Whole Council Elections

More about this option: the council is currently undertaking a statutory consultation on changing the electoral cycle to whole council elections as of 2023. Over a 4-year period, the cost of running Local Authority elections is £1,024,200. The costs of running whole council elections, with the provision of funding for the event of by-elections, would be £520,000 over the same 4-year period

Saving: £125k

Corporate Office

The role of the Corporate Office is to ensure that Wirral Council is a high-performing, well-managed, strategic organisation. The office stands as a key interface between the Chief executive, Senior Leadership Team, Leader of the Council, Members and Key Stakeholders.

Its functions include:

- Business Support
- Communications
- Customer Feedback and Members Enquires
- Quality and Organisational Effectiveness
- Strategy, Policy and Partnerships

PROPOSAL: Service Re-design

More about this option: The Corporate Office will be redesigned to include the centralisation of corporate resources and more integrated and flexible teams. This work will be delivered over 18 months. The first phase of this will be achieved through the deletion of two vacancies across the Policy and Communications Teams and a reduction in the marketing budget. Phase two will be developed during 2022/23 and will align with the Change Programme service re-design schedule to explore opportunities for centralised corporate services.

Saving: £110k

Adult Care and Health

The Department provides or secures the majority of care and support services through adult social care, which is part of the wider health and social care system. Its functions include:

- Care standards
- Commissioning Older People and Mental Health and Disability Services
- Public Health
- Strategic Commissioning
- Wirral Intelligence Service

PROPOSAL: Demand mitigation – Technology and Care Package Review

More about this option: This proposal is an increased efficiency requirement for 2022/23 against the community care budget based on a range of case reviews, demand management approaches and care provider market shaping.

Saving: £3.89m

Resources

The Resources department includes all the professional services needed for the efficient running and sound financial management of Wirral Council. Its functions include:

- Debt recovery and income
- Finance and Investment
- Health and Safety
- Human Resources
- ICT Strategy and Delivery
- Merseyside Pension Fund
- Organisational change
- Organisational Development and Design
- Procurement and Commercial Management
- Programme Office
- Revenues and Benefits and Council Tax

PROPOSAL: One Stop Shop Establishment Review

More about this option: The One Stop Shop (OSS) Network has reduced in line with a reduction in visitors to OSS outlets. Savings are achieved by the removal of vacant posts which are no longer required.

Saving: £99k

PROPOSAL: Review of Treasury Activity

More about this option: Debt management and investment opportunities cover a wide range of activities undertaken within Treasury Activity. This proposal will look at investment opportunities, including social and green investment aims. Additionally, there is also potential for new revenue streams from alternative investments. Both will be balanced against risk and current income targets.

Saving: £500k

PROPOSAL: Revenues & Benefits Review and Restructure

More about this option: This proposal includes a full review to examine every aspect of the service and its processes, looking to streamline as much as possible and removing wasteful/bureaucratic tasks from the service. This process includes the expansion and introduction of new automated processes.

The savings will be realised by a mixture of removing vacant posts from the existing structure which can be released from the review, together with streamlining management structures and a limited offer of early voluntary retirement.

Saving: £750k

PROPOSAL: Reduction of Strategic Change Revenue Budget

More about this option: Partial funding of business change can be supported through flexible use of capital receipts for transformation, and this can therefore release revenue budget whilst enabling the service to deliver major business change to the council.

Saving: £650k

PROPOSAL: Restructure of Procurement and Commercial Teams

More about this option: Following an in-year staffing restructure that saw a central team of commercial officers restructured, this proposal seeks to remove the remaining budget for the team. Additional roles supporting income generation are in place within the relevant Directorates.

Saving: £230k

PROPOSAL: Review of Finance Team Structure

More about this option: This saving proposal, of reducing resources within the Finance function, is presented in recognition of the changes being put forward elsewhere in the council that will impact on the support services required.

Saving: £50k

PROPOSAL: Cease Business Rates Contribution

More about this option: It is proposed that the annual contribution to reserves to guard against successful appeals of business rates is halted.

Saving: £696k

PROPOSAL: Modernisation of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Service

More about this option: In order to improve the councils digital offer, Microsoft are being engaged to support a Digital Transformation programme. As part of this programme the ICT services will be modernised which will see processes digitalised and automated. This will enable savings to be made across ICT.

Saving: £50k

PROPOSAL: Review of Business Support Unit

More about this option: With the move to working from home, less stationery is being purchased and there is less of a requirement to provide courier services. Savings will therefore be made within the Business Support Unit in lines with these changes in working patterns.

Saving: £20k

PROPOSAL: Review of Internal Audit – Income and Efficiencies

More about this option: In addition to staff efficiencies the department will increase the selling of services to third parties, which will include new customers that have already been secured.

Saving: £80k

PROPOSAL: Reduction of Learning & Development Budget

More about this option: This one-year temporary saving can be made as a result of the introduction of a new Learning Experience Platform, reduction in face-to-face delivery and optimising the apprenticeship levy. In addition to this the council have increased income which will be paid in 2022/23 tax year from the government apprenticeship start incentive payments which can be utilised to support learning and development.

Saving: £100k

PROPOSAL: Investment Statutory Override Pressure Removal

More about this option: Councils had been granted a time limited special exemption on the way they account for financial investments. If this exemption was not in place, this would present a pressure for the council of an estimated £1m.

This had previously been included as a pressure as the time limit was about to expire. However, the time period has now been extended meaning that the pressure can be removed from 2022/23.

Saving: £1m

Neighbourhoods

The Neighbourhood's department is made up of the everyday functions that are key to the wellbeing of local areas and local people. The department includes a wide and varied range of universal, front-line services, such as:

- Assisted Travel
- Climate change
- Community Safety
- Customer Services
- Emergency Planning
- Environmental Health
- Highways Design and Maintenance
- Highways, Traffic and Road Safety
- Leisure
- Libraries
- Street Scene
- Major events
- Network Management
- One stop shops
- Parks and Countryside
- Road Safety
- Trading Standards
- Traffic Management
- Waste and Environment

PROPOSAL: Review of Leisure Service

More about this option: This proposal includes a full-service review of the council's Leisure Services Division to consider all elements delivered and focus on removal of unnecessary cost and duplication, improved commissioning, and a lean target operating model.

It is likely that there will be staffing implications as a consequence of the review, the totality of which cannot be identified at the present time. Any reduction in staffing numbers would be attempted to be achieved through EVR/VS, redeployment and/or retraining.

Saving: £178k

PROPOSAL: Highways Operational Services - Income exploration

More about this option: This proposal will explore the commercial opportunities and internal promotion of the various services available through Highway Operational Services in order to create additional income generation. It will also seek to further expand other departmental work requests within the council from Assets, Education, Parks & Countryside,

and third party works currently undertaken for service partners such as NHS and Wirral Older People's Parliament.

Income: £30k

PROPOSAL: Closure of Europa Fun/Leisure Pool & Enhanced Gym Offer

More about this option: This proposal includes the closure of the Leisure Pool ('Fun' Pool) at Europa Pools (wave machine, swimming pool features, flumes, etc). The option does not include the closure of the centre nor competition swimming pool which would continue to remain open. The service would also seek to repurpose the Leisure Pool, using the space to create a larger indoor gym offer and therefore increased income.

Saving: £246k Plus £20k increased income from Gym offer

PROPOSAL: Increased Catering Across all Leisure Sites

More about this option: This saving proposal would see an increase in income generation at the Sail Loft site through maximisation of customer numbers and sales. Further income could be generated through expansion of the service at different sites across the borough.

Income: £60k

PROPOSAL: Outdoor Water Sports Offer at West Kirby Marine Lake

More about this option: This budget option is an income generation scheme that would utilise the Marine Lake for new outdoor activities. These activities have become popular during the pandemic as people have sought alternatives to indoor activities whilst restrictions were in place.

Additionally, there will be more opportunities for residents to become involved in new sports activities, as well as having the potential to attract additional customers at the Sail Loft site

Income: £15k

PROPOSAL: Catering Pod at Leasowe Leisure Centre for Football Traffic

More about this option: This proposal will look to establish an outdoor catering offer (catering pod) at Leasowe Leisure Centre. An extension of the council's expanded in-house catering offer, the unit will primarily serve the high footfall football league traffic during the months of September – May. There is also scope to expand operation by re-locating the unit during the remaining months of the year.

Income: £21k

PROPOSAL: Permanent Closure and Demolition of Woodchurch Leisure Centre

More about this option: This option is for the closure of Woodchurch Leisure Centre. Due to the condition of the site, its low usage levels comparable with other sites, the required level of investment and the subsidy it carries, is proposed that the centre is then demolished to make way for a growth in outdoor leisure provision. The site adjacent to the Leisure Centre will see the construction of a new 3G Artificial Grass playing pitch and accompanying pavilion during the 2022-23 financial year.

Saving: £402k

PROPOSAL: Temporary Closure and Remodelling of Bidston Tennis Centre

More about this option: The option would see the closure of the Tennis Centre (indoors) in Bidston for a 12-month period whilst a facility upgrade takes place at the site within the core of the building. It has been identified by an independent leisure consultant that the facility mix within the building does not complement local need or local demographic. Consequently, a redesigned centre will meet the needs of the local population and provide additional income. The new development would take out 3 indoor tennis courts and replace with extensive soft play and gymnastics offer. A second new 3G AstroTurf pitch would also be built within the outside grounds of the site in a funding partnership between the Football Foundation and the Council with further income potential.

Saving: £114k

PROPOSAL: Review of Golf Offer

More about this option: This proposal will seek to generate savings through the closure of the two lowest income generating 18-hole golf courses, two leisure based recreational New Brighton sites and introduction of a new pricing/membership model for municipal golf. Brackenwood and Hoylake golf courses will close, along with Wallasey Beach and Kings Parade leisure sites. The two remaining golf courses will still provide a sufficient 'golf offer' to the residents of Wirral whilst substantially reducing the financial subsidy to the authority.

Saving: £328k

PROPOSAL: Exercise on Referral Programme

More about this option: Wirral's Leisure Services Team has a pool of qualified professionals who will be commissioned by health partners to provide patients with an opportunity to engage in a structured programme of physical activity or exercise by working with a qualified exercise professional to provide a positive introduction to being active.

Income: £100k

PROPOSAL: Reprovision of the Library Service

More about this option: This saving is associated with the development of a new operating model in libraries which will consolidate and realign the current libraries estate and resources to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for all who wish to use it. The new operating model will retain four central libraries and four community libraries, as well as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) only provision co-located in community assets. The home reader service will remain for residents who cannot access a traditional library, as will the council's digital library and online offer. In addition, the service will invest in a Mobile Library with a 3000-book capacity to ensure hard to reach communities have access to a library service. The saving will be achieved through library closures, service realignment and a staffing restructure.

Full details of the new Libraries Operating Model will be available from 10th January via: <http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=956&MId=9051>

Saving: £814k

PROPOSAL: Floral Pavilion – New Operating Model

More about this option: This option would reduce the operational budget for the Floral Pavilion Theatre and Conference Centre, whilst increasing the amount of income generated by the venue. The venue does attract a subsidy however this has diminished in recent years due to improved management and this trend of working towards a leaner operating model with greater income potential is expected to continue.

Saving: £350k - £400k

PROPOSAL: Standardisation of Residents Parking Permits

More about this option: This proposal will look to standardise charges for residents parking permits for existing and new residents parking schemes to cover all operational running costs including the council's set-up, maintenance, administration, and enforcement costs for existing and new schemes.

Income: £110k

PROPOSAL: Fleet Efficiencies in Transport - Going Green

More about this option: This budget saving option is to appoint an independent expert to undertake a no-cost 'Green Fleet Review'. This review will examine the existing fleet in terms of vehicle choice, fuel economy and recommend mileage reduction strategies.

Saving: £20k

PROPOSAL: Capitalisation of Highways Salaries

More about this option: All highways and transport approved schemes for 2021/22 are funded from the Combined Authority allocation for Integrated Transport Block (ITB), which is £1.15m. It is anticipated that the new City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement allocation for Wirral over 5 years from 2022 will be between £5m and £11m.

Revenue savings can be achieved by increasing capital recharges – that is staff time spent on individual schemes.

Saving: £15k

PROPOSAL: Highway's Maintenance Contracts

More about this option: This proposal will see a reduction in the highway lining and the street furniture budgets. This will include seating, guard rails, signs, and bollards.

Saving: £25k

PROPOSAL: Streetlighting Service Savings

More about this option: Due to the introduction of the new LED lanterns programme savings can be made through ceasing night-time lighting inspections. In addition, the capital investment for illuminated signage has enabled us to replace all the illuminated bollards with reflective surfaces, therefore savings can also be made within the illuminated signage budget.

Saving: £50k

PROPOSAL: Car Park Maintenance - 1 Year Budget Reduction

More about this option: This proposal will see a revenue saving from the car parks maintenance budget for 1 year only. A budget will remain for essential safety repairs to potholes etc.

Saving: £50k

PROPOSAL: Transport Efficiencies

More about this option: This proposal will include a review of the in-house fleet, such as the outsourcing of the tyre fitting supply, repair, and fitting service. A management restructure is also planned in order to realign the service and create workforce efficiencies.

Saving: £70k

PROPOSAL: Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport Review

More about this option: This proposal focuses on the outsourcing of the in-house SEN adult transport service. Savings are based on the average cost of the current external provision compared to in-house provision, plus outsourcing of tyre supply, repair, and fitting service.

Saving: £0 in 22-23 then £118k in 23-24

PROPOSAL: Eco and Forest School Income

More about this option: The council provides a well-established and highly regarded Eco Schools programme and has been developing a Forest Schools initiative. Such provision is currently offered to schools free of charge. This proposal sets out an opportunity to implement a charge for parts of these programmes.

Income: £20k

PROPOSAL: Tree Management Team Commercial Offer

More about this option: The primary purpose and function of the Tree Risk and Inspection Team is to inspect and manage the council's tree stock (both highways and parkland) and mitigate any risk associated. However, there is some capacity within the inspection team to conduct tree inspections and provide management advice for partnering organisations and other landowners.

Income: £25k income

PROPOSAL: Market Rental for Park Café

More about this option: This option will seek to increase the income received from rents, specifically for the rent of a café at Royden Park by a commercial operator.

Income: £10k

PROPOSAL: Income Increase on Allotments

More about this option: This option would seek to increase the income received from allotments by increasing the annual fees charged to allotment holders.

Income: £50k

PROPOSAL: Increase in Charges for Waste and Environmental Services

More about this option: This proposal would see an increase in charges (income) for a range of services provided by Waste and Environmental Services (including garden waste collection service subscription, skip permits, collection of bulky items, collection of waste and recycling from schools and cost to supply a new wheelie bin), as well as freezing the litter bin budget for one year and annual contract efficiency savings.

Income: £462k

PROPOSAL: Removal of Vacancies in Environmental and Waste Team

More about this option: This option seeks to approve a post for early voluntary retirement (EVR) from the Waste and Environmental Services Team, plus not filling of existing or new vacancies.

Saving: £100k

PROPOSAL: Suspension of Climate Emergency Initiatives

More about this option: This saving proposal would see the suspension of the budget for climate emergency action plan projects, for the period of one year. External funding will be sought to continue environmental projects where available.

Saving: £250k

PROPOSAL: Remodelling of Street Cleansing, Plus Special Events

More about this option: This option would see the removal of the additional community permanent presence street cleansing service in some areas of the borough, as well as the removal of the budget for cleansing of special events e.g., River of Light, Cycling Tour of Britain, Giants etc. Removing this budget would result in cleansing costs for special events being charged out to promoters/organisers.

Saving: £214k

PROPOSAL: Cease Overtime Budget in Parks

More about this option: This Savings option would review the use of the additional hours budget, given the reduced maintenance and cessation of green spaces.

Saving: £15k

PROPOSAL: Re-Design Parks Service Reducing Maintenance and Service Costs

More about this option: This option will focus on service reduction and maintenance in parks. It will include the cessation of public firework displays, a reduction in maintenance cuts from 10 to 8 per annum, ceasing maintenance in open spaces including up to 10-15 local parks, and ceasing maintenance of 50% of the remaining parks. Local parks which also have play areas, football pitches or bowling greens etc have been excluded from this list.

Saving: £655k

PROPOSAL: Income Strategy - Cemeteries and Crematorium Service

More about this option: This option would provide increase choice for bereaved families with regards to burials and memorials and offer corporate sponsorship opportunities within Wirral's Cemeteries and Crematorium grounds for funeral directors.

Income: £53k income

PROPOSAL: Review of Anti-Social Behaviour Team

More about this option: This option will involve an alternative service delivery model and reduction of one post. The Team will continue to prioritise the statutory functions and consider the impact on the Community Safety Strategy.

Saving: £50k

PROPOSAL: Review Engagement Officer Secondment

More about this option: This proposal will seek agreement to not backfill an Engagement Officer for one year secondment to Regeneration.

Saving: £35k

PROPOSAL: Reduction in Community Patrol Service

More about this option: This option would see a redesign of the Community Patrol Service to an Out of Hours / High Demand service only (the CCTV and Control Room Function will remain 24/7, 365).

Saving: £150k

PROPOSAL: 50% Reduction in School Crossing Patrol Service

More about this option: The service has 80 established sites but traditionally carries a number of vacancies due to difficulties in recruiting to the role. This option will require the permanent deletion of the 18 vacant sites plus the closing of at least a further 25 sites to be achieved by reprioritising of sites into highest risk areas / highest number of peds crossing.

Saving: £100k (22/23) £40k (23/24)

PROPOSAL: Cessation of Constituency Team and Remodelling of Section

More about this option: This saving presents the deletion of the Constituency Team and Redeployment of officers where possible. The saving will be achieved through associated staffing reductions.

Saving: £346k

PROPOSAL: Introduction of an Overnight Camper Van Parking Charge in New Brighton

More about this option: This option will focus on income generation from introducing an overnight parking charge for leisure vehicles (motorhomes / campervans) on the coastal areas of New Brighton.

There is currently no charge for overnight parking. New Brighton has seen regeneration and an increase in tourism in recent years. The proposal will help to manage overnight parking in this area which has also seen a significant growth particularly since the start of the pandemic.

Income: £35k

PROPOSAL: Deletion of Vacant Posts

More about this option: There are a number of vacant posts across the Neighbourhoods Directorate. This option would see these posts deleted to achieve the savings.

Saving: £302k

PROPOSAL: Reduction in The Budget for Office Related Expenditure

More about this option: This proposal is made up of a reduction in Neighbourhoods budgeted expenditure for office related expenses such as printing and paper services, lighting, electricity, heating, etc.

Saving: £23k

PROPOSAL: Review of the Neighbourhood Services Directorate

More about this option: A fundamental review of the Neighbourhood Directorate will take place in order to drive efficiencies and realign service. This will be achieved through an EVR process that will commence in early January.

Statutory services within this Directorate will not be affected by the review.

Saving: £360k



Have your say

Wirral Council Budget 2022-23 Public Consultation Report



Consultation: 2 November 2021 – 28 November 2021

Report: 6 December 2021

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1.0 Executive Summary

Wirral Council continues to face financial challenges as it moves ahead with setting a budget for 2022-23. The authority faces a potential maximum budget gap of around £30m between funding (from council tax, fees, and grants) and the cost of providing services at the current level.

The council must therefore plan to make any necessary savings in order to deliver a legal balanced budget.

At Policy and Resources committee on 25 October 2021 a stakeholder consultation programme was agreed. The objectives of the public consultation were to:

- Achieve a proportionate balance of responses which accurately reflects stakeholder make up
- Ensure external coverage is balanced in tone and content, with inaccuracies challenged
- Ensure residents and stakeholders understand the scale of the budget challenge, and feel able to contribute their views
- Provide an engagement plan that will:
- Allow residents to contribute strategically about what's important to them and their community
- Address the difficult budget choices/decisions that must be taken.

Through the consultation people were asked to tell us what their priorities are, what council services matter most to them, and where they believe the Council should be focusing its efforts to help develop the budget plan. The results of the consultation are provided in this report.

1.1 Key Findings

1.1.1 The Questionnaire

A total of 534 survey responses were received, 530 online responses and 4 paper copies. These responses have been amalgamated and are reported on as a whole.

- **Parks and Open Spaces** and **Children’s Services** were highlighted as being among the top 3 for both most valued services (Q1) and most important services to invest more resources in (Q2).
- Q1. The services that were most frequently placed as being most valued were:
 1. Children’s Services (46.1% of respondents)
 2. Parks and Open Spaces (42.5%)
 3. Adult Social care (40.0%)
- Q2. The services that were most frequently placed as most important to invest more resources in were:
 1. Parks & Open Spaces (39.2%)
 2. Museums (39.0%)
 3. Children’s Services (36.3%)
- Q3. **Safe and Pleasant Communities** was the priority most frequently placed as most important, by 46.2% of respondents.
 - Within the **Safe and Pleasant Communities** priority, working with partner agencies to reduce crime and tackle anti-social behaviour was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 53.3% of respondents.
 - Within the **Sustainable Environment** priority, the protection of our local environment action was most frequently placed as most important, by 41.8% of respondents.
 - Within the **Brighter Futures** priority, ensuring our children and young people have equal access to education opportunities was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 47.0% of respondents.
 - Within the **Inclusive Economy** priority, supporting local businesses and job creation was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 47.0% of respondents.

- Within the **Active and Healthy Lives** priority, working collaboratively with our partner agencies to improve mental wellbeing was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 34.6% of respondents.
- Suggestions and Ideas that appeared in-common on both the free text section of the questionnaire (Q4) and the ideas board were:
 - The council should have fewer consultants (32 comments/23 ideas).
 - The council should have fewer councillors (29 comments /38 ideas).

See below for a full summary of the free text responses to Question 4.

See section 1.1.2 for a full summary of the ideas board.

Q4. Respondents were invited to outline suggestions as to how the council could make additional savings or generate income.

- The most common themes that suggestions fell in to were:
 - Council workforce (136 people).
 - Council operation (54).
 - Suggestions for chargeable services (51).
- Overall the top specific suggestions were:
 - The council should have fewer consultants (32).
 - The council should have fewer councillors (29).
 - Reduce salaries within the council (26).

1.1.2 The Ideas Board

- 112 contributions were made to the ideas board by 78 participants. Contributions could be in the form of an idea (x80) or a comment on an idea (x32) and participants were able to make more than one submission.
- The most common themes that ideas fell in to were:
 - Council's operation and structure (score of 71).
 - Ideas relating to maintenance (57).
 - Ideas relating to golf courses (42).
- The most popular and 'liked' specific ideas were:

- The council should have fewer councillors (38).
- Hoylake Beach should be maintained (24).
- The council should use fewer consultants (23).

1.1.3 Demographics

- Most of the respondents (87.9%) classed themselves as local residents.
- The most represented Wirral Ward is Hoylake and Meols (11.3%), the least represented Wirral Ward was Bromborough (0.2%).
- Most Wirral respondents were in Decile 1 or decile 6 of the IMD (13.7% each), where decile 1 is the most deprived, and decile 10 is the least deprived.
- 59.3% of respondents were male; 36.4% were female.
- The most represented age group was 65–74-year-olds (24.7%).
- The least represented age group was 16–27-year-olds (0.8%).
- 93.4% of respondents were of white British ethnicity.
- 2.7% were of a non-white or 'other' ethnicity.
- 81.6% of respondents were heterosexual.

2.0 Methodology

Through the budget consultation people were asked to tell us what their priorities are, what council services matter most to them, and where they believe the Council should be focusing its efforts to help develop the budget plan.

Following the consultation, the feedback will be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 17 January 2022, where further budget consideration will be made. Full Council will have the final say on the authority's budget for the next year.

The consultation was carried out between 2 November – 28 November 2021. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk with a page dedicated to the Budget Consultation. A Budget Booklet, a Financial Strategy Document and an Easy Read Version of the consultation were published on the portal and available for download to provide key information about the consultation.

Two online tools were provided for residents to engage with:

- An online questionnaire – to respond to specific questions about budget proposals.
- An ideas board – for residents to post 'ideas' about the council budget.

Respondents were also able to request paper copies of the survey, including an easy read version, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online tool.

2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed on the themes of the Wirral Plan and enabled stakeholders to record their feedback and opinions on how the council budget could be allocated, and savings made according to their priorities and what matters to them most. To enable further understanding, and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns.

Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment question, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report. Free text results are provided as a count, rather than as percentages. This is because one comment or idea may cover multiple themes, therefore there are considerably more themes than contributions. Percentages derived from this as a denominator are non-sensical and confusing so have been omitted

Four paper questionnaires were submitted. These responses were examined, and the points raised incorporated into the online questionnaire results to ensure the views were represented in the final analysis.

2.2 Ideas Board

The Ideas Board function was set up to allow respondents to submit their own ideas about the budget, these could be voted for ('liked') and commented on by other members of the public.

Ideas and comments were reviewed and categorised into themes. Those categories of ideas that were most prevalent and/or most 'liked' have been identified and highlighted.

Ideas Board results are provided as a score, rather than as percentages. This is because one comment or idea may cover multiple themes, therefore there are considerably more themes than contributions. Percentages derived from this as a denominator are non-sensical and confusing so have been omitted.

2.3 Staff Feedback

In addition to direct Manager/ Departmental Management Team communications, a specific area was set up on the council's new Intranet Platform. This included channels for questions, feedback, and ideas, as well as links to the Have Your Say platform. Regular staff briefings, member engagement, 'Exec view' messages and specific sessions for our harder to reach staff were also undertaken. All responses were reviewed and summarised for reporting.

2.5 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

2.6 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:

- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.
- For specific tools where percentages do not add up to 100, this may be due to rounding, or the question is multi-coded. All free-text questions and ideas that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple

themes. Therefore, with free-text responses being categorised using a coding system, some comments will be multi-coded and therefore add up to more than 100 percent.

The Policy and Resources Committee requested that the engagement should aim to ‘Achieve a proportionate balance of responses which accurately reflects stakeholder make up’. To achieve responses from a representative sample of the Wirral population would require a range of targeted engagement to ensure the correct sample size, and coverage of response from the correct population demographics. Consultations designed to achieve this are often run in a range of stages based on analysis of the responses throughout the process and often use a range of engagement techniques such as contacting residents using a call centre. The time frame allowed to run this consultation did not allow this to be achieved. As noted above this consultation provides information on the opinion of residents who engaged.

2.7 Communication

A major social and digital media sub campaign was also carried out, which included regular messaging, targeted demographical and geographical communications, resident e-newsletters, and regular theme specific stories, linking with the narrative, and urging residents and stakeholders to take part in the consultation.

Through partnership agreements, we worked closely with Wirral Globe, Metro, and more local digital news channels. A mix of printed adverts and advertorials were placed to encourage participation, as well as digital click-through links and targeted news stories.

3.0 Results

3.1 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was responded to by 534 people, with 530 through the online portal and 4 paper copies submitted. No questions were mandatory so respondents could choose which questions to respond to.

Due to the size of data tables, the main tables for each of the closed questions are contained in [Appendix 1](#).

Council Services

Q1. Which Council Services do you value the most?

“We believe the services the council provides are all important. In planning for how we fund and deliver these services, we want to know more about which council services(s) you value the most”.

Please tell us how important these services are to you on a scale of 1-5 (1 being very important and 5 being of no importance at all).

The services that were most frequently placed as being most valued were:

1. Children’s Services (46.1% of respondents)
2. Parks and Open Spaces (42.5%)
3. Adult Social care (40.0%)

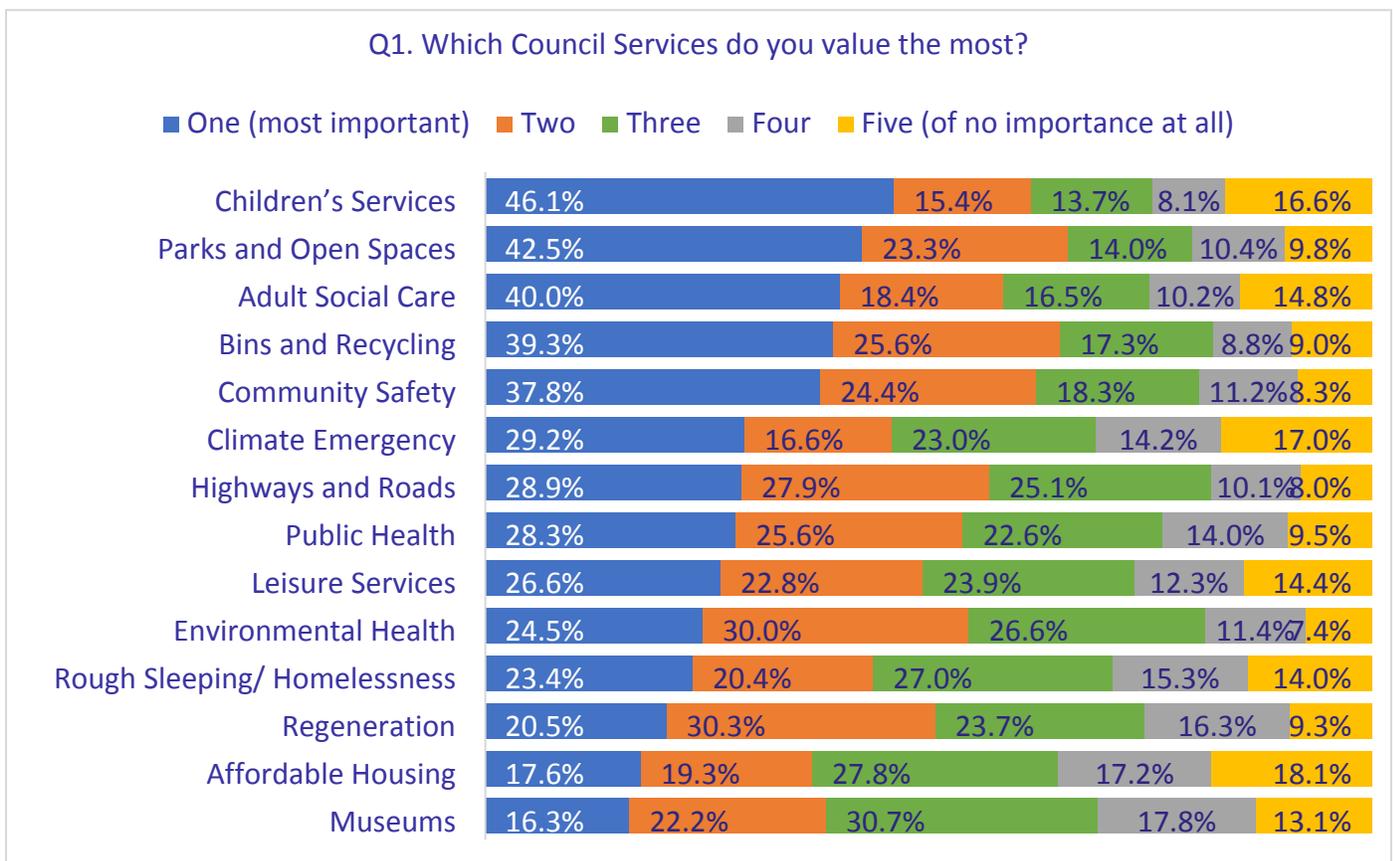


Figure 1: Chart showing which Council Services respondents value the most

Those services most frequently placed as least valued were:

4. Affordable Housing (18.1%)
5. Climate Emergency (17.0%)
6. Children’s Services (16.6%)

Q2. Tell us which services you believe the council needs to invest more resources into.

The services that were most frequently placed as most important to invest more resources in were:

1. Parks & Open Spaces (39.2%)
2. Museums (39.0%)
3. Children’s Services (36.3%)

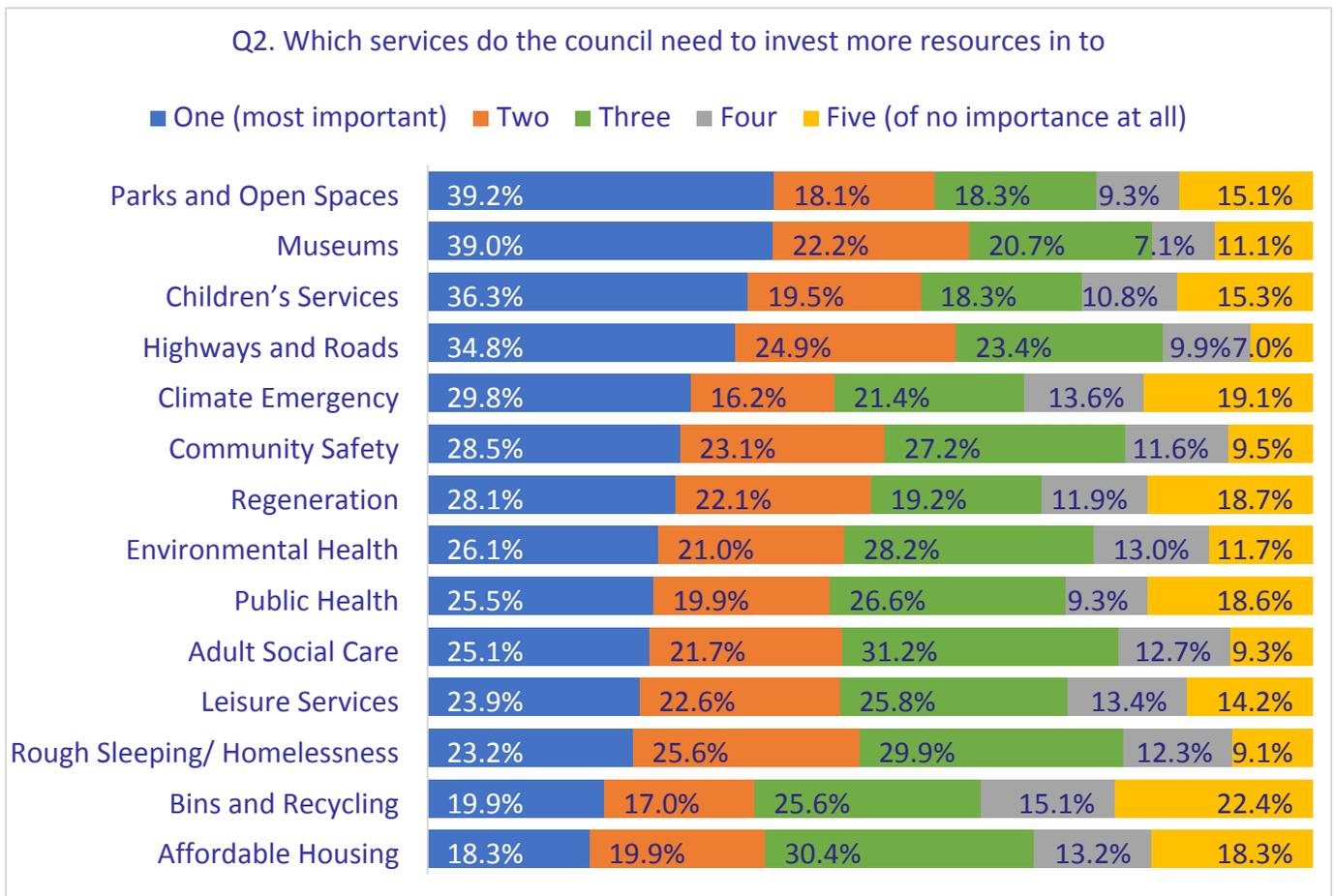


Figure 2: Chart showing which services respondents feel that the council needs to invest more resources into

Those services that were most frequently placed as of no importance at all to invest more resources in were:

1. Bins and Recycling (22.4%)
2. Climate Emergency (19.1%)

The Wirral Plan and the council budget

Q3. Please tell us how important these priorities are to you on a scale of 1-5.

Safe and Pleasant Communities was the priority most frequently placed as most important, by 46.2% of respondents.

Active and Healthy Lives (31.8%), Brighter Futures (31.4%) and a Sustainable Environment (31.3%) were all similarly placed in importance.

A Sustainable Environment was the priority most frequently placed as of no importance at all (13.1%).

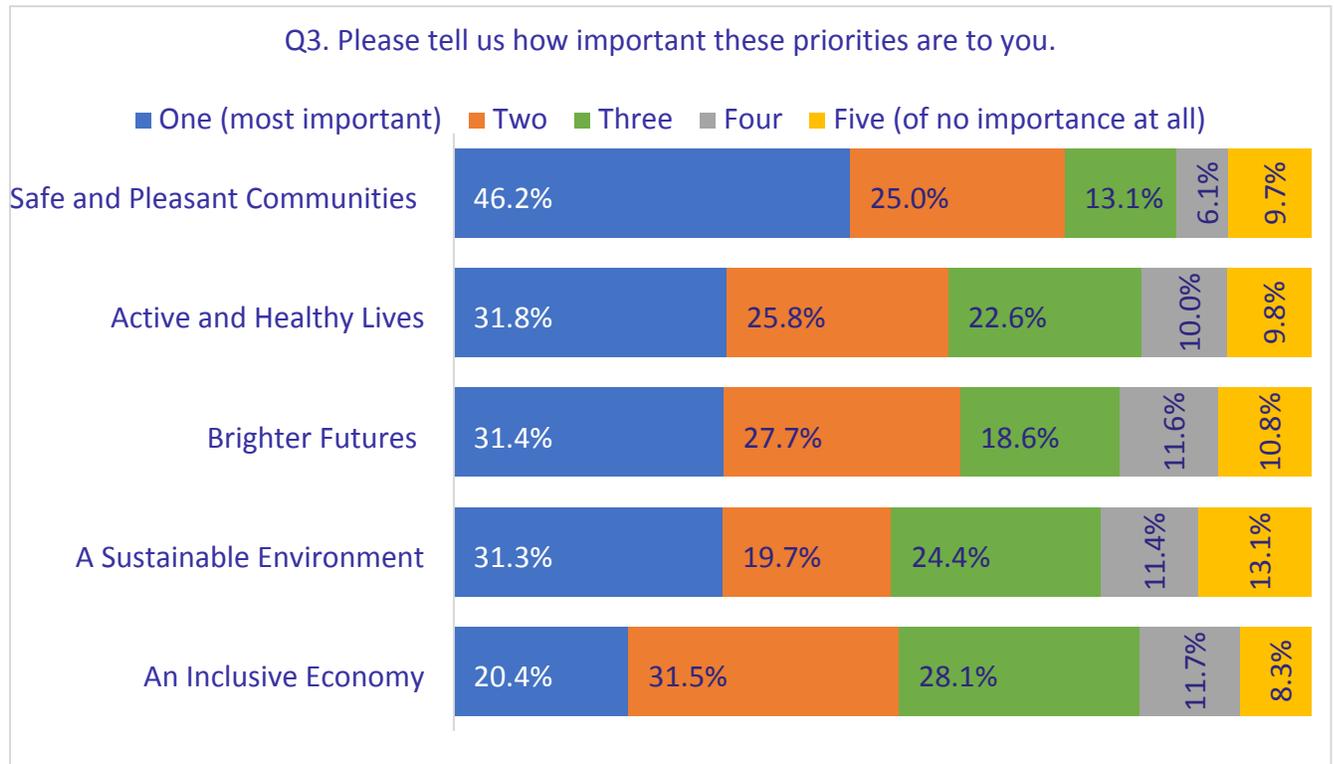


Figure 3: Chart showing how important these priorities are to respondents

Q4. Sustainable Environment: How important are these actions?

Within the Sustainable Environment priority, the protection of our local environment action was most frequently placed as most important, by 41.8% of respondents.

The continue to respond to the climate emergency action was most frequently placed as of 'no importance at all' (14.9%).

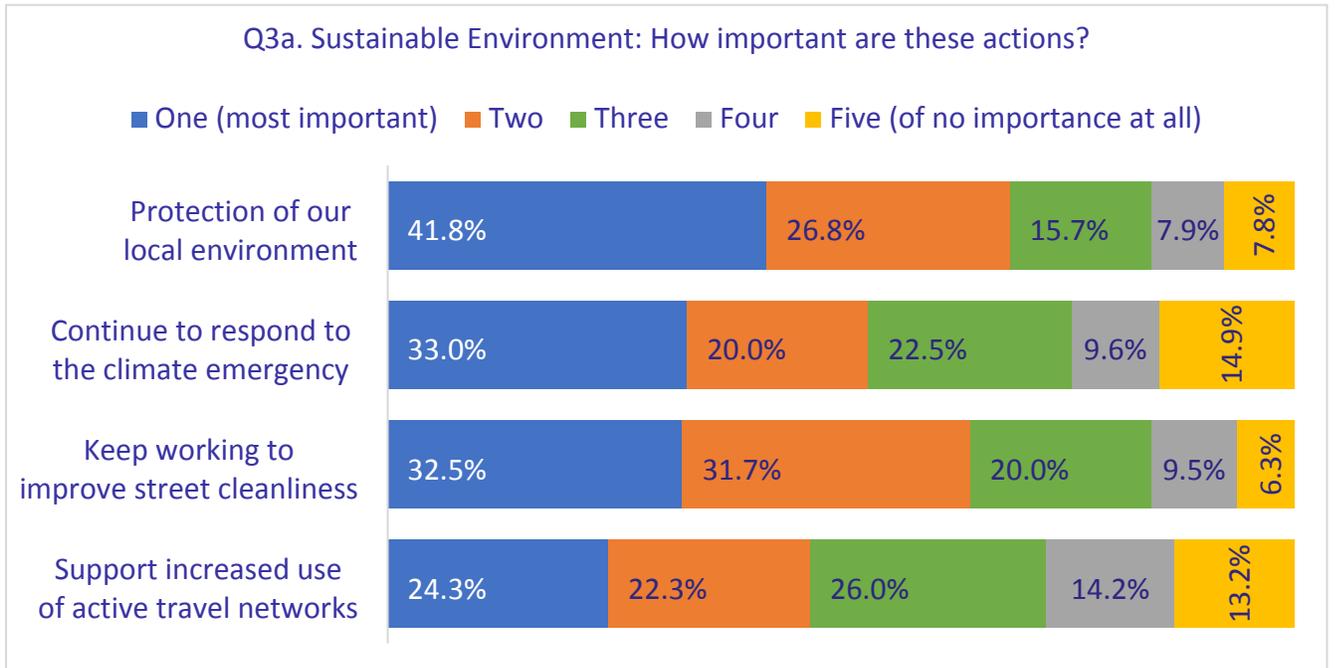


Figure 4: Chart showing how important the Sustainable Environment actions are to respondents

Q5. Brighter futures: How important are these actions?

Within the Brighter Futures priority, ensuring our children and young people have equal access to education opportunities was the action most frequently placed as most important, by 47.0% of respondents. This was also the action most frequently placed as being of 'no importance at all'.

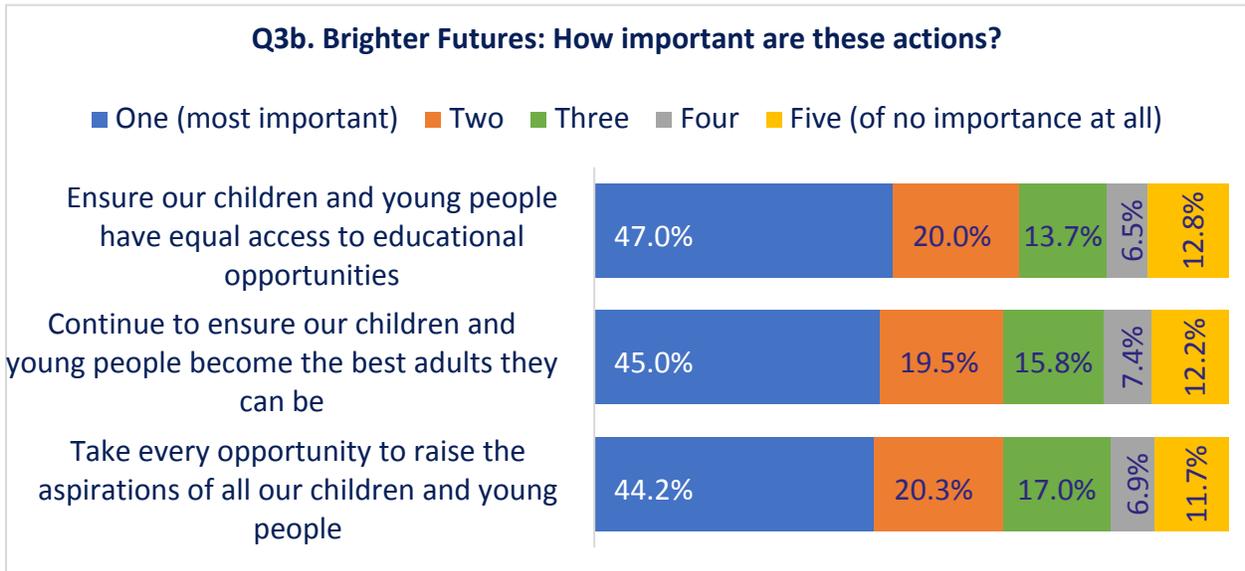


Figure 5: Chart showing how important the Brighter Futures actions are to respondents

Q6. Inclusive Economy: How important are these actions?

Within the Inclusive Economy priority, supporting local businesses and job creation was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 47.0% of respondents.

Developing quality, affordable, sustainable homes was most frequently placed as of 'no importance at all' (13.7%).

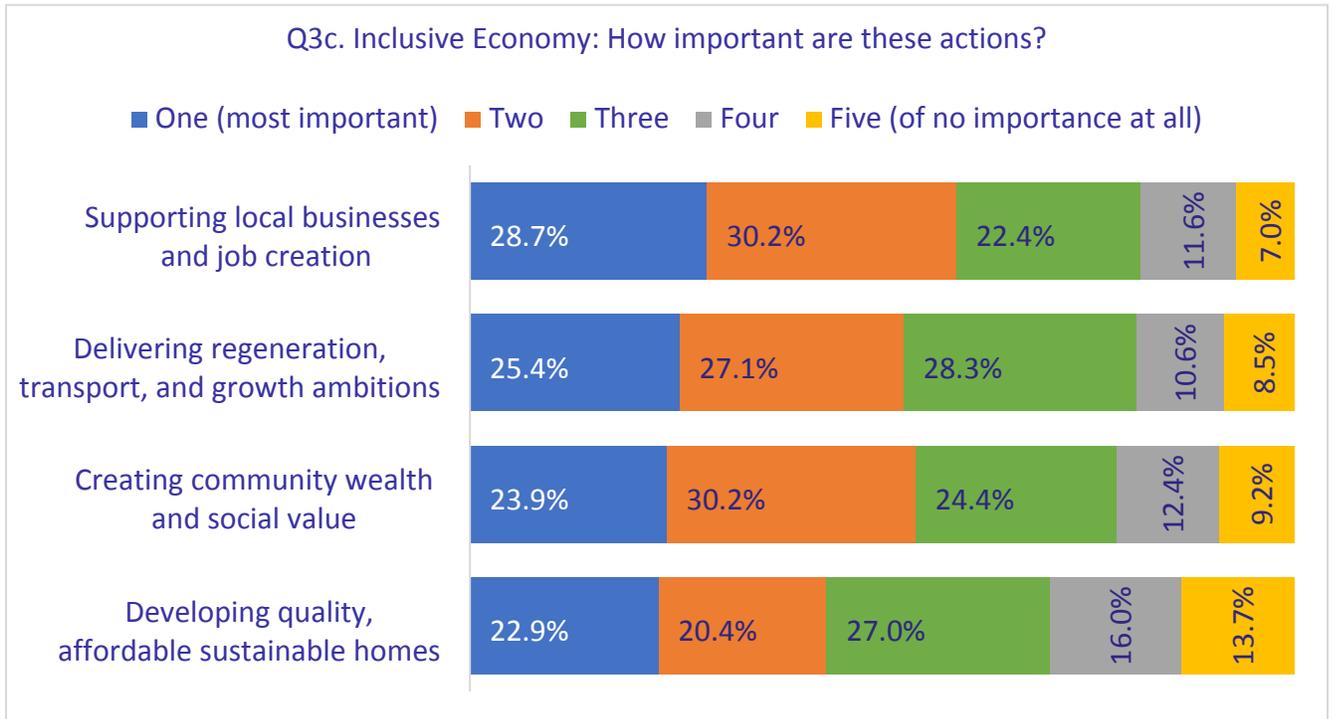


Figure 6: Chart showing how important the Inclusive Economy actions are to respondents

Q7. Safe and Pleasant Community: How important are these actions?

Within the Safe and Pleasant Community priority, working with partner agencies to reduce crime and tackle anti-social behaviour was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 53.3% of respondents.

Tackling rough sleeping and homelessness was most frequently placed as of 'no importance at all' (13.7%).

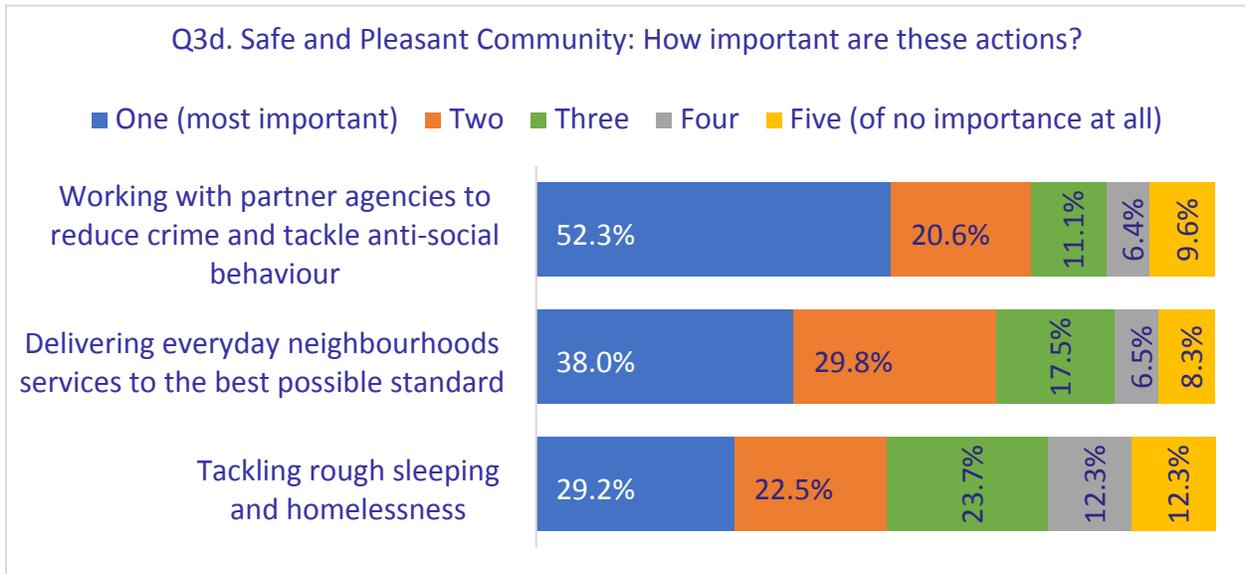


Figure 7: Chart showing how important the Safe and Pleasant Community actions are to respondents

Q8. Active and Healthy Lives: How important are these actions?

Within the Active and Healthy Lives priority, working collaboratively with our partner agencies to improve mental wellbeing was the action was most frequently placed as most important, by 34.6% of respondents. This action was also most frequently placed as of 'no importance at all' (11.8%).

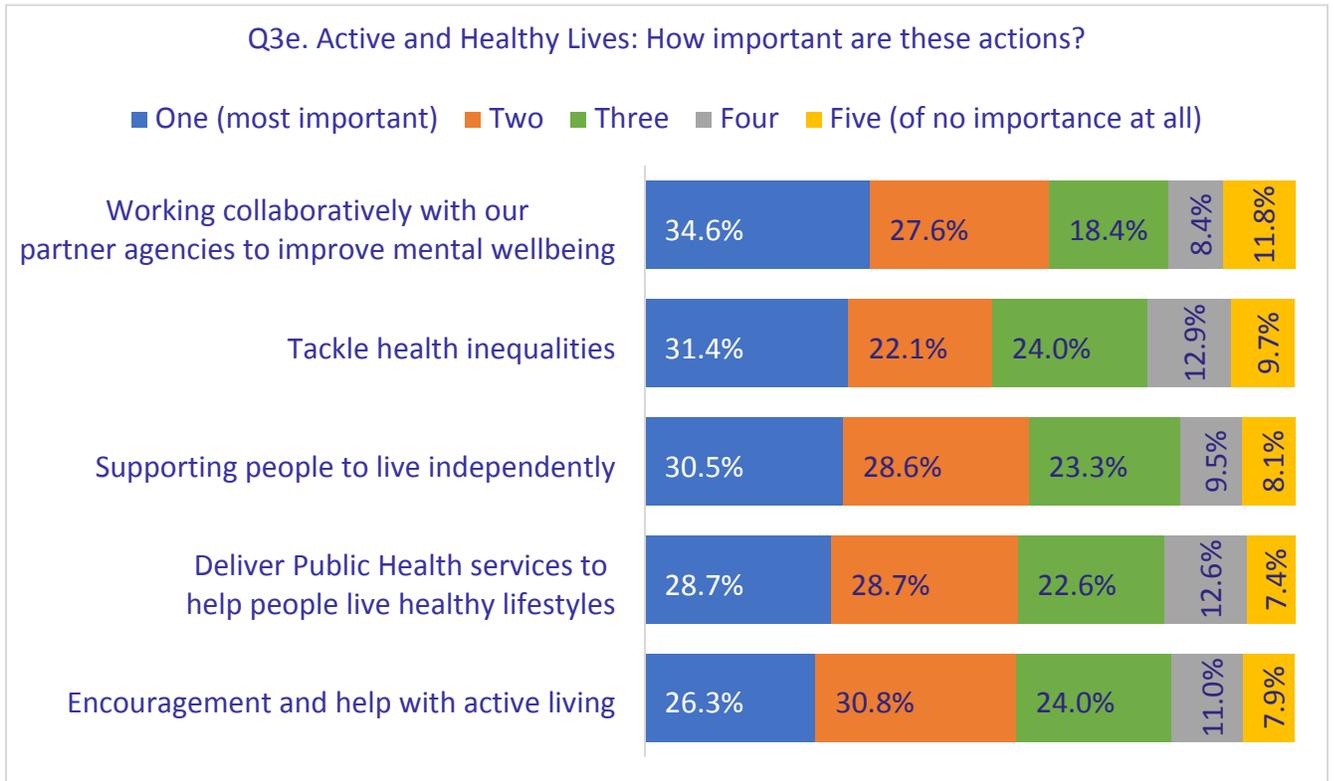


Figure 8: Chart showing how important the Active and Healthy Lives actions are to respondents

Q9. Please outline any suggestions you may have for how the council can make additional savings or potential sources of income.

The most common themes that suggestions fell in to were:

1. Council workforce (136).
2. Council operation (54).
3. Suggestions for chargeable services (51).



Figure 9: Top categories of suggestions

Main Category	Count
Council Workforce	136
Council Operation	54
Chargeable Service suggestions	51
Regeneration	46
Assets	42
Service closure/reduction	36
Maintenance	30
Leisure Services	29
Fines and enforcement	26
Climate Emergency	25
Golf Courses	20

Table 1: Top categories of suggestion.

Overall the top specific suggestions:

1. The council should have fewer consultants (32).
2. The council should have fewer councillors (29).
3. Reduce salaries within the council (26).



Figure 10: Top suggestions

Category	Subcategory	Total
Council Workforce	Fewer consultants	32
Council Workforce	Fewer councillors	29
Council Workforce	Reduce salaries within council	26
Assets	Sell council buildings	22
Regeneration	Cease existing projects - no new projects	21
Chargeable Services	Parking charges - support	16
Chargeable Services	Parking charges - oppose	14
Maintenance	Hoylake Beach - Rake/clean up	14

Table 2: Top suggestions



Below is a summary of those suggestions that were put forward more than 10 times.

1. **The council should employ fewer consultants (32).** Council workforce.

32 people put this forward as a suggestion. It is felt that the functions carried out by consultants should be carried out in-house, and that a workforce should be recruited that have the necessary skills.

2. **Reduce the number of Councillors serving Wirral (29).** Council workforce

29 people put forward this suggestion. Most commonly, people suggested that there should be only 1 or 2 councillors per ward, and that expenses paid should be reduced.

3. **Reduce salaries paid (26).** Council workforce

26 people put forward this suggestion. It is felt that salaries, particularly amongst upper management should be reduced or capped.

4. **Sell council-owned buildings (22).** Assets

22 people put forward this suggestion as a way of potentially generating revenue and saving costs in maintaining older buildings. There were 4 counter suggestions, where people were against selling off buildings, particularly the town halls.

5. **Curtail regeneration projects and do not embark on new ones (21)** Regeneration

21 people suggested that the various regeneration projects do not represent value for money and often do not reach fruition. It is felt that money should be spent on essential services and/or where there will be an immediate impact. 7 of the suggestions specifically mentioned that regeneration in Birkenhead in particular should cease.

6. **Parking charges - for (16) and against (14)** Chargeable services

Parking charges divided opinion amongst the suggestions.

16 people suggested that parking charges should be retained, or introduced, in order to increase revenue and/or deter car use. Some suggest all car parking should be charged, others that specific types should be chargeable such as on-street parking, parking at retail parks, workplace parking and non-resident parking.

There were 14 counter suggestions to this, suggesting that to charge for parking at smaller town and village high streets would have a detrimental effect on the businesses there, result in closures, and encourage people to out of town retail parks instead. It is also highlighted that removing parking charges at beauty spots would encourage people to be active and improve health and wellbeing.

7. **Hoylake Beach - Rake/clean-up (14) Maintenance**

14 people suggested that maintenance resume at Hoylake beach, and that it be returned to an 'amenity beach. The prevalent feeling in regard to this is that beach is no longer usable for leisure and recreation by the community, nor is an attraction to visitors. It is felt this will have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing and the local economy. In addition, it is thought that the unmaintained beach will attract vermin.

3.2 Ideas Board Results

Ideas were examined and sorted into categories and given a 'score' based on the frequency that the idea was put forward and how many likes they received. Counter comments have been taken into account, and where someone disagrees with an idea, or submits an opposing idea, the score was adjusted (reduced) accordingly.

The score was calculated by adding the number of submissions and number of combined likes and subtracting the number of counter comments.

Where one individual has made multiple submissions saying the same thing, these are combined to one submission per category discussed. Any 'likes' accrued across the submissions are combined and retained.

The most popular type of ideas were those relating to the

1. Council's operation and structure (score of 71).
2. Ideas relating to maintenance (57).
3. Ideas relating to golf courses (42).

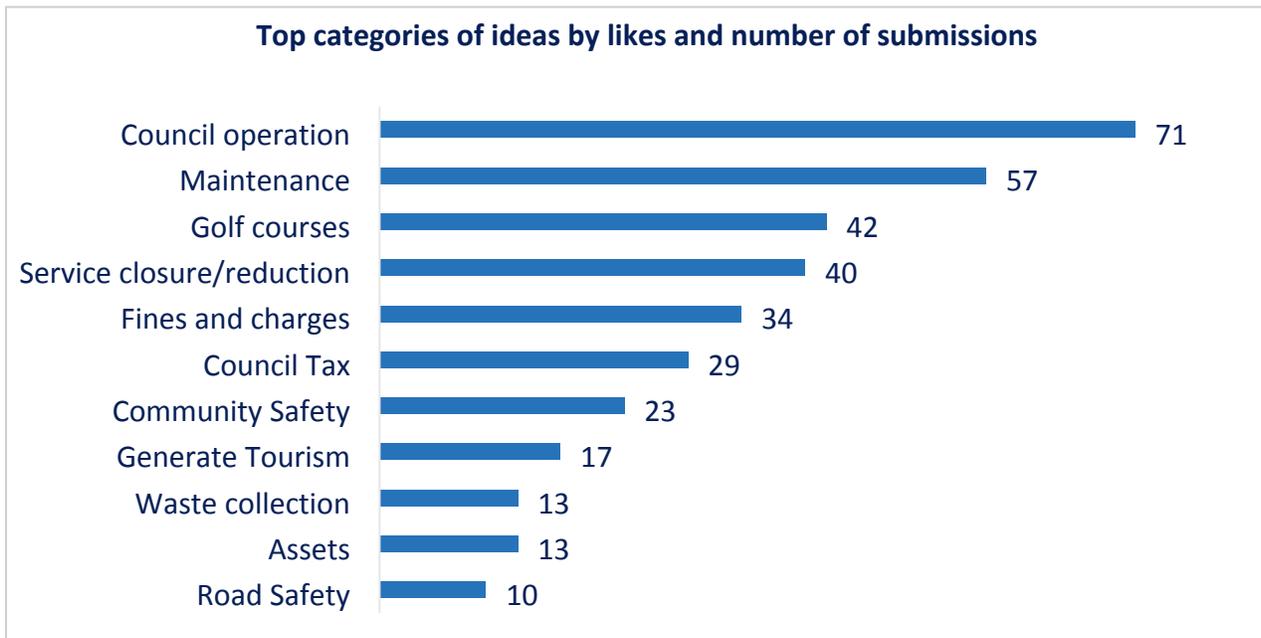


Figure 11: Top idea categories

Category	Sum of Likes	Submissions	Total approval
Council operation	58	13	71
Maintenance	41	16	57
Golf courses	24	18	42
Service closure/reduction	26	14	40
Fines and charges	24	10	34
Council Tax	21	8	29
Community Safety	17	6	23
Generate Tourism	15	2	17
Waste collection	11	2	13
Assets	9	4	13
Road Safety	8	2	10

Table 3: Top idea categories – score matrix

The most popular and ‘liked’ specific ideas were:

1. The council should have fewer councillors (38).
2. Hoylake Beach should be maintained (24).
3. The council should use fewer consultants (23).

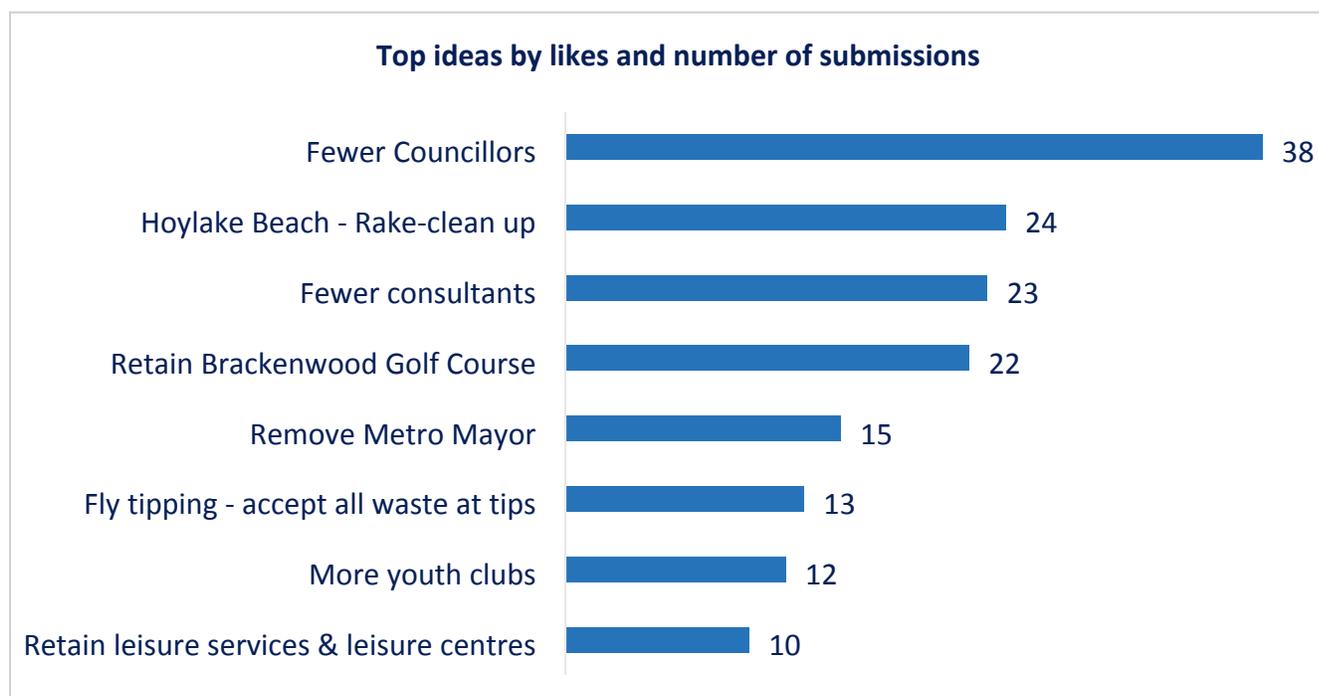


Figure 12: Top individual ideas

Row Labels	Sum of Likes	Submissions	Counter Comment	Total approval
Fewer Councillors	33	5		38
Hoylake Beach - Rake-clean up	25	7	8	24
Fewer consultants	20	3		23
Retain Brackenwood Golf Course	17	5		22
Remove Metro Mayor	14	2	1	15
Fly tipping - accept all waste tips	11	2		13
More youth clubs	10	2		12
Retain leisure services & leisure centres	7	3		10

Table 4: Top individual ideas – score matrix

Below is a summary of those ideas that achieved a frequency and popularity score of more than 10:

1. **Reduce the number of Councillors serving Wirral (38).** Council Operation and Structure

Five people put forward submissions mentioning this as an idea, which between them garnered 33 ‘likes’. Most commonly, people suggested that there should be only 1 councillor per ward, not 3.

One of these submissions was the joint most popular idea on the ideas board and received 14 ‘likes’:

Reduce the number of Wirral Councillors

I feel we could cut the number of councillors in each ward. Pensby, Thingwall & Irby has 3. Totally unnecessary. Whilst ward councillors do not receive a salary they do receive allowances, are loaned computer equipment when required. Every little helps.

Share    

1 Comment

14 

2. **Resume maintenance of Hoylake Beach (24)** Maintenance

Seven people put forward submissions relating to this, which between them garnered 25 ‘likes’. There were also contrary opinions about this (8), that the beach should be returned to nature, which have been taken into account in the final scoring.

The feeling is that beach is no longer usable for leisure and recreation by the community, nor is an attraction to visitors. It is felt this will have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing and the local economy.

The counter argument is that it would be environmentally beneficial to see the beach returned to nature and would attract wildlife and thus wildlife enthusiasts. It saves maintenance costs and stabilises the sand.

3. **Council to employ fewer consultants (23)** Council Operation and Structure

Three ideas to this effect were submitted, which garnered 23 'likes'. The prevalent feeling is that consultants were expensive and unnecessary. It is felt that the work should be carried out in-house and staff employed who could carry out the roles currently outsourced.

4. **Retain Brackenwood Golf Course (22)** Golf

Five people submitted ideas and comments to this effect, which were 'liked' by 17 people.

Brackenwood Golf Course is predominantly mentioned in terms of courses that should be retained, Hoylake golf course and the plans for an Arrowe Park golf resort were mentioned as those that could be sold or scrapped.

5. **Remove metro mayor charge from council tax (15)** Council Tax

Two people submitted ideas or comments to this effect, garnering 14 likes. It is felt that this function does not benefit Wirral.

One of these submissions was the joint most popular idea on the ideas board and received 14 'likes':

Scrap metro mayor tax from council tax.

It's a pointless greedy tax, that does not benefit Wirral

Share    

2 Comments

14 

There was a counter comment to this submission which stated that a metro mayor afforded the ability to make regional decisions independent of Westminster, and that funding was attached to role.

6. **Reduce fly tipping by accepting all waste at tips and making kerbside collections cheaper (13)** Waste Collection

Two people submitted ideas or comments to this effect, garnering 11 likes.

By accepting all types of waste, and commercial waste at Wirral recycling centres fly-tipping would be greatly reduced or eliminated thus saving the cost of clearance. Similarly, if kerb-side bulk waste collection services were cheaper, this would lead to a reduction in fly tipping.

7. More youth clubs (12) Community safety and crime prevention

Two people submitted ideas or comments to this effect, garnering 10 likes.

It is noted that there is little for young people to do, and this can lead to anti-social behaviour born of boredom. The Hive in Birkenhead is highlighted as being a success and it is suggested that specifically West Kirby youth club should re-open.

8. Retain services and leisure centres (10) Health & wellbeing

Three people submitted ideas or comments to this effect, garnering 7 likes.

The benefits of sport and leisure on physical and mental health are highlighted as particularly important following COVID-19 restrictions. It is specifically queried as to why Woodchurch Leisure Centre is not open.

3.3 Staff Engagement

There were five staff responses fed back through the channel set up within the Council. The key areas in the feedback included:

Ideas for cost savings:

- Income generation in services such as cemeteries and crematorium.
- Reduce spending on buildings by reducing the Councils assets or bringing more services together to share buildings.
- Reducing the number of inappropriate jobs created in some parts of the Council. Inappropriate jobs relate to those established without consultation, ring fenced to certain individuals, lack of job evaluation and manager level pay with no management responsibility.
- To have a more inclusive curriculum and education system with support within schools and colleges utilising learning bases so a lot of money doesn't have to be spent on alternative curriculum for young people.
- Utilising the services that already exist including third sector to support instead of creating new services.
- Utilising tourists' spots to bring money in.

- Having more courses and educational opportunities in the Wirral so people don't have to travel out or move away.

What the Council priorities should be:

- Vulnerable Adults and Children
- Front line services e.g., bins, streetlighting, schools, social services.
- Use of the intelligence we have.
- Valuing and utilising the skills of the experienced staff we have.
- Senior management listening to ideas from staff not just once a year at budget time.
- Investing in young people, more opportunities and youth workers in the communities where young people are.

4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online Budget Consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below.

Most of the respondents (87.9%) classed themselves as local residents.



Figure 13: Who are you registering as?

Are you registering as:	Count	%
A local resident	494	87.9%
An employee of Wirral Council	32	5.7%
A member of a voluntary or community organisation	21	3.7%
A local Business	7	1.2%
Other	6	1.1%
An elected Member of Wirral Council	2	0.4%
Total	562	100.0%

Table 5: Who are you registered as?

The most represented Wirral Ward is Hoylake and Meols (11.3%), the least represented Wirral Ward was Bromborough (0.2%). Most Wirral respondents were in Decile 1 or decile 6 of the IMD (13.7% each), where decile 1 is the most deprived, and decile 10 is the least deprived.

Parts of Seacombe and Bidston and St. James were most represented in decile 1. Parts of Hoylake and Meols ward was most represented in decile 6.

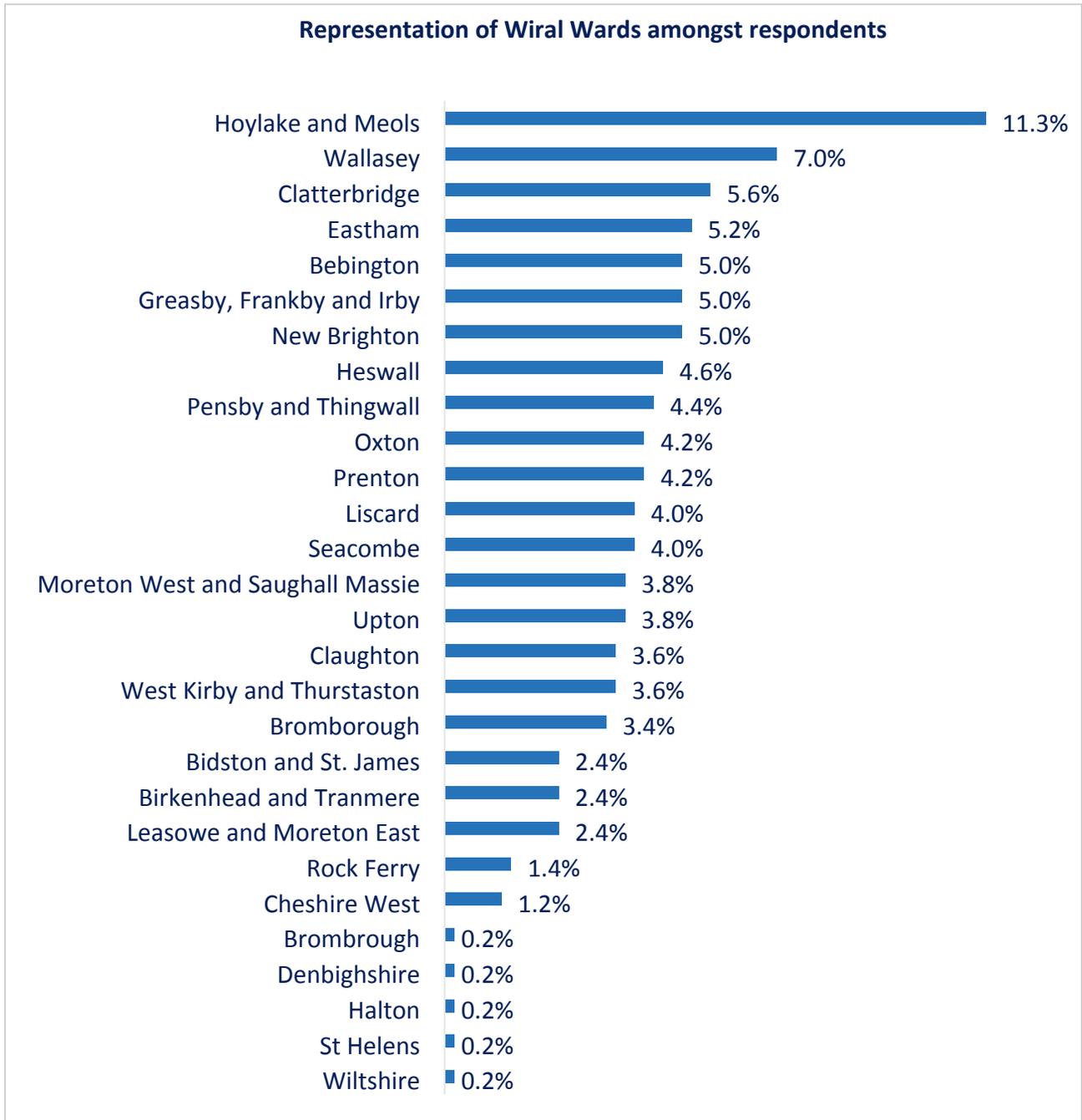


Chart 1: Respondent location by ward

Ward Name	Count	%
Hoylake and Meols	57	11.3%
Wallasey	35	7.0%
Clatterbridge	28	5.6%
Eastham	26	5.2%
Bebington	25	5.0%
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	25	5.0%
New Brighton	25	5.0%
Heswall	23	4.6%
Pensby and Thingwall	22	4.4%
Oxton	21	4.2%
Prenton	21	4.2%
Liscard	20	4.0%
Seacombe	20	4.0%
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	19	3.8%
Upton	19	3.8%
Claughton	18	3.6%
West Kirby and Thurstaston	18	3.6%
Bromborough	17	3.4%
Bidston and St. James	12	2.4%
Birkenhead and Tranmere	12	2.4%
Leasowe and Moreton East	12	2.4%
Rock Ferry	7	1.4%
Cheshire West	6	1.2%
Bromborough	1	0.2%
Denbighshire	1	0.2%
Halton	1	0.2%
St Helens	1	0.2%
Wiltshire	1	0.2%
Uncategorised	10	2.0%
Total	503	100.0%

Table 6: Respondent location by ward.

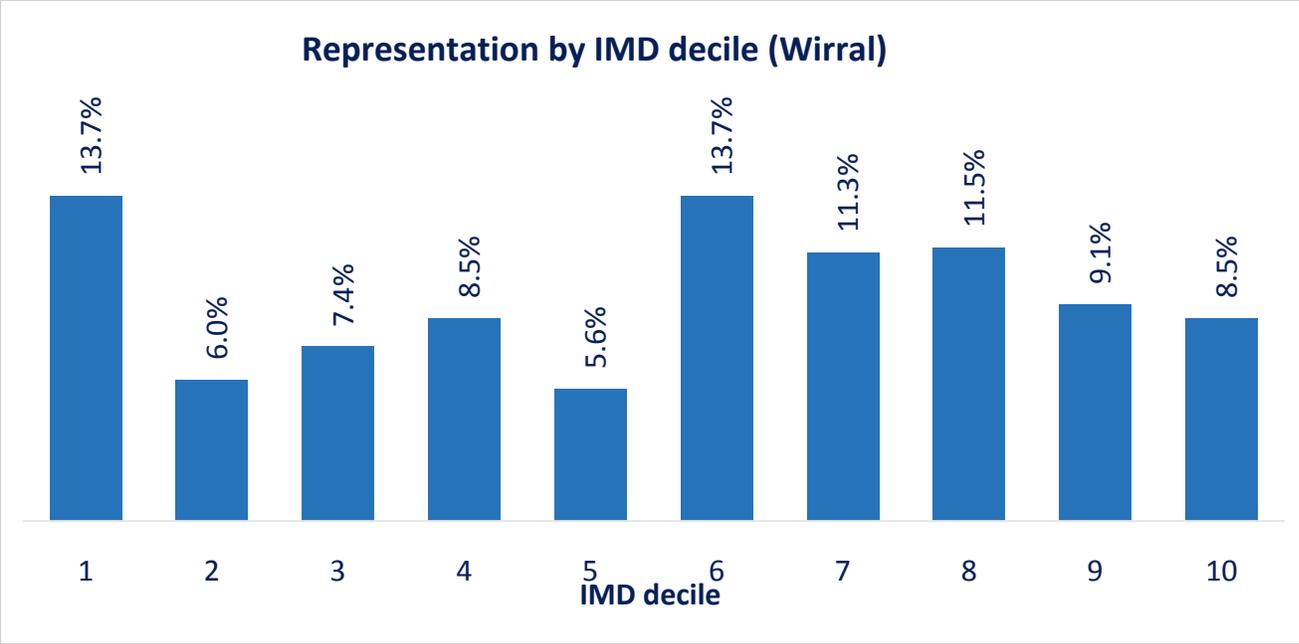


Figure 14: Representation by IMD decile

IMD Decile	Count	%
1	69	13.7%
2	30	6.0%
3	37	7.4%
4	43	8.5%
5	28	5.6%
6	69	13.7%
7	57	11.3%
8	58	11.5%
9	46	9.1%
10	43	8.5%
Outside Wirral	10	2.0%
Unavailable	13	2.6%
Total	503	100.0%

Table 7: Representation by IMD decile

The gender of respondents was 59.3% male, 36.4% female, with 3.5% preferring not to say and 0.8% preferring their own term.

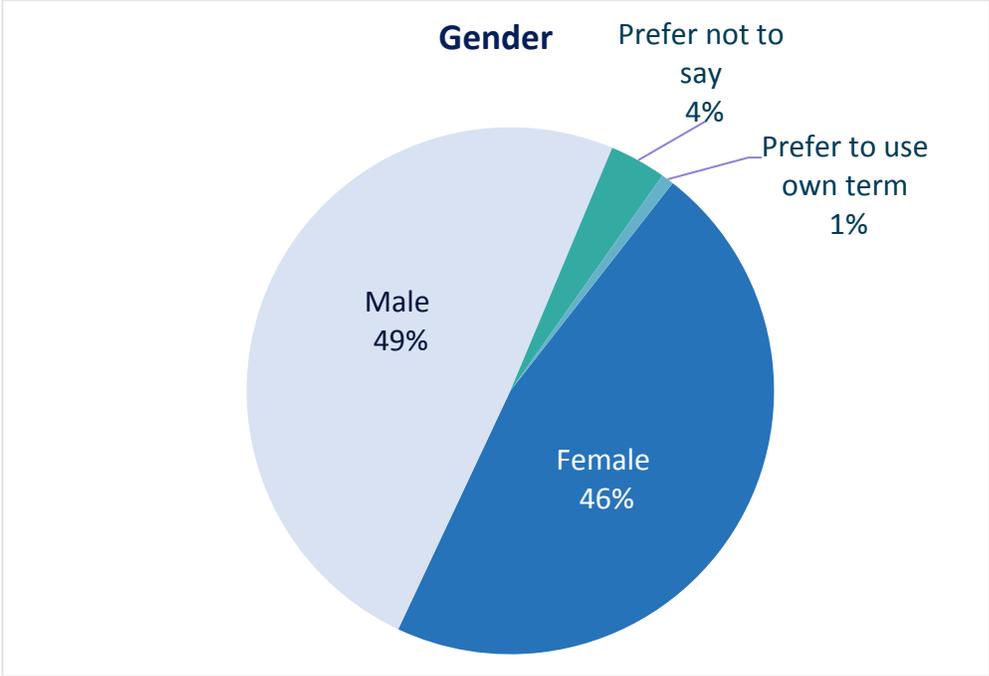


Chart 2: Gender of respondents

The age group profile is illustrated with the most common age groups were 65-74 years (24.7%), followed by 55-64 years (23.1%) and 45-54 years (20.4%). The least represented groups were 16-24 years (0.8%) and over 75s (7.6%).

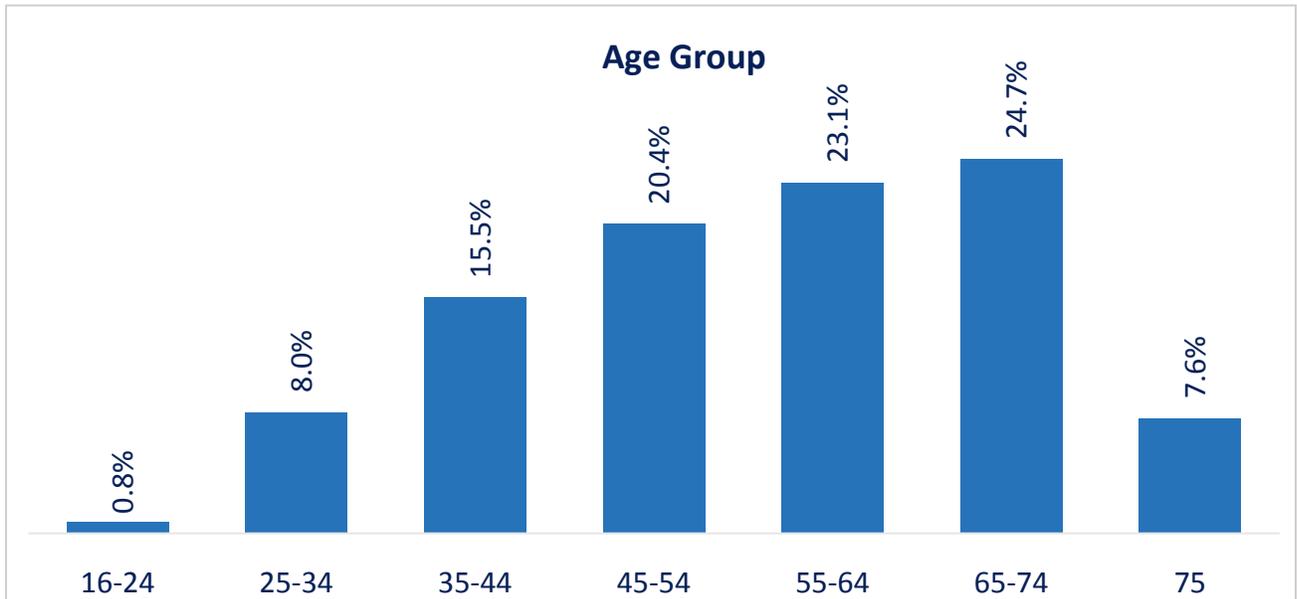


Chart 3: Age group of respondents

93.4% of respondents were white British, with only 14 (2.7%) respondents were of a non-white or other ethnicity.

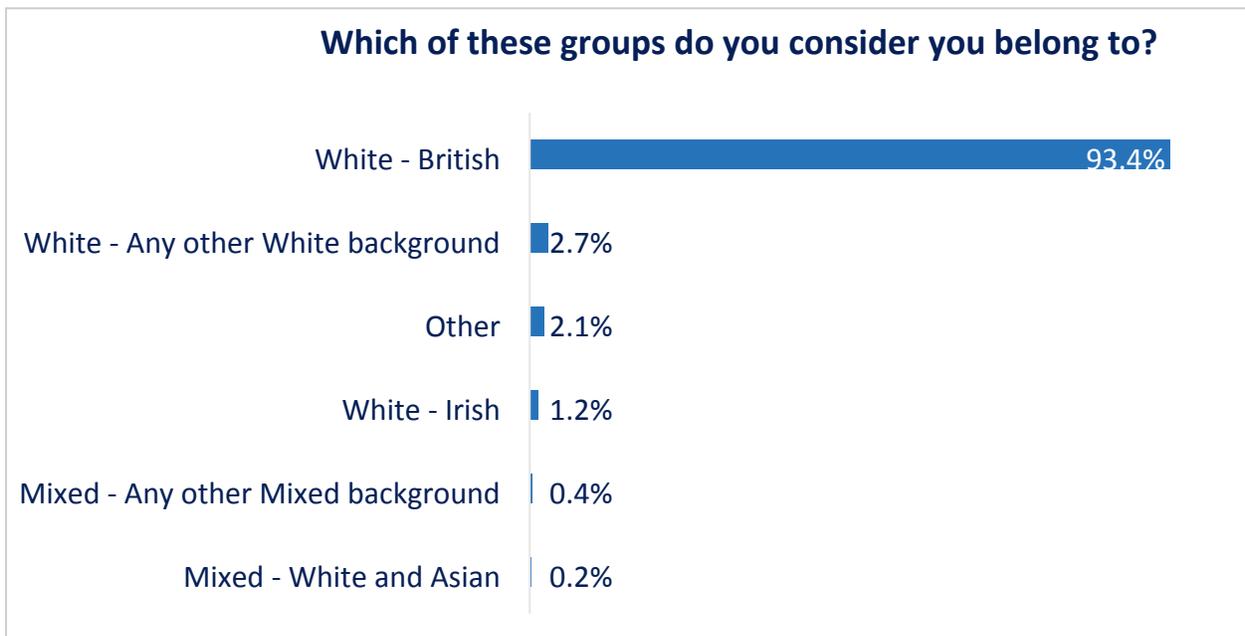


Chart 4: Ethnicity of respondents

81.6% of respondents were heterosexual, 3.6% were gay/ lesbian, 1.4% bisexual and 13.5% preferred not to say.



Chart 30: Sexual orientation of respondents

4.2 Have your say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future.

Site registration allows us to confirm the number of engaged participants through the completion of the questionnaire or ideas board; 530 people completed the survey and 78 people contributed 112 ideas to the board.

2,710 visited the Budget Consultation page of the Have Your Say site, of these 182 downloaded a document, 530 people completed the survey and 78 people contributed 112 ideas to the board.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were direct visits (2,006 visits) where people have either pasted or typed the URL in to their browser; these generated high rate of engagement with 32.5% of visits resulting in completion of the survey and/or ideas board.

Compared to this, whilst social media accounted for the second highest volume of traffic (1,120 visits) it generated the lowest rate of engagement - 11.8%.

TRAFFIC CHANNEL	AWARE VISITS	INFORMED VISITS (%)	ENGAGED VISITS (%)
DIRECT	2,006	70.0%	32.5%
SOCIAL MEDIA	1,120	61.3%	11.8%
EMAIL	199	63.3%	15.6%
SEARCH ENGINE	135	57.0%	19.3%
REFERRALS	67	67.2%	14.9%
.GOV SITES	9	66.7%	33.3%

Table 8: Site traffic sources

Appendix 1: Data Tables

Q1 Which council services do you value the most? data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Adult Social Care				
One	209	4	213	40.0%
Two	98		98	18.4%
Three	88		88	16.5%
Four	54		54	10.2%
Five	79		79	14.8%
Total	528	4	532	100.0%
Children's Service				
One	242	3	245	46.1%
Two	82		82	15.4%
Three	72	1	73	13.7%
Four	43		43	8.1%
Five	88		88	16.6%
Total	527	4	531	100.0%
Bins and Recycling				
One	207	2	209	39.3%
Two	134	2	136	25.6%
Three	92		92	17.3%
Four	47		47	8.8%
Five	48		48	9.0%
Total	528	4	532	100.0%
Affordable Housing				
One	90	3	93	17.6%
Two	101	1	102	19.3%
Three	147		147	27.8%
Four	91		91	17.2%
Five	96		96	18.1%
Total	525	4	529	100.0%
Highways and Roads				
One	152		152	28.9%
Two	144	3	147	27.9%
Three	131	1	132	25.1%
Four	53		53	10.1%
Five	42		42	8.0%
Total	522	4	526	100.0%
Climate Emergency				
One	154	1	155	29.2%

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Two	87	1	88	16.6%
Three	120	2	122	23.0%
Four	75		75	14.2%
Five	90		90	17.0%
Total	526	4	530	100.0%
Community Safety (Including Antisocial Behaviour)				
One	197	3	200	37.8%
Two	128	1	129	24.4%
Three	97		97	18.3%
Four	59		59	11.2%
Five	44		44	8.3%
Total	525	4	529	100.0%
Rough Sleeping and Homelessness				
One	122	2	124	23.4%
Two	107	1	108	20.4%
Three	142	1	143	27.0%
Four	81		81	15.3%
Five	74		74	14.0%
Total	526	4	530	100.0%
Regeneration (Including Economic Growth and Job Creation)				
One	108		108	20.5%
Two	158	2	160	30.3%
Three	124	1	125	23.7%
Four	86		86	16.3%
Five	48	1	49	9.3%
Total	524	4	528	100.0%
Public Health (Including addressing Health Inequalities)				
One	146	3	149	28.3%
Two	134	1	135	25.6%
Three	119		119	22.6%
Four	74		74	14.0%
Five	50		50	9.5%
Total	523	4	527	100.0%
Environmental Health				
One	128	1	129	24.5%
Two	155	3	158	30.0%
Three	140		140	26.6%
Four	60		60	11.4%
Five	39		39	7.4%
Total	522	4	526	100.0%
Leisure Services (Including Leisure Centres and Golf Courses)				

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
One	139	1	140	26.6%
Two	118	2	120	22.8%
Three	126		126	23.9%
Four	65		65	12.3%
Five	75	1	76	14.4%
Total	523	4	527	100.0%
Museums				
One	85	1	86	16.3%
Two	116	1	117	22.2%
Three	161	1	162	30.7%
Four	94		94	17.8%
Five	68	1	69	13.1%
Total	524	4	528	100.0%
Parks and Open Spaces				
One	223	2	225	42.5%
Two	122	1	123	23.3%
Three	74		74	14.0%
Four	55		55	10.4%
Five	51	1	52	9.8%
Total	525	4	529	100.0%

Q2 Which Services do the council need to invest more resources in data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Adult Social Care (including Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding and Independent Living)				
One	141	4	145	36.3%
Two	78		78	19.5%
Three	73		73	18.3%
Four	43		43	10.8%
Five	61		61	15.3%
Total	396	4	400	100.0%
Children's Services (Including Education, Safeguarding, Early Help and SEND)				
One	153	3	156	39.2%
Two	72		72	18.1%
Three	72	1	73	18.3%
Four	37		37	9.3%
Five	60		60	15.1%
Total	394	4	398	100.0%
Bins and Recycling				
One	93	2	95	25.1%
Two	80	2	82	21.7%

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Three	118		118	31.2%
Four	48		48	12.7%
Five	35		35	9.3%
Total	374	4	378	100.0%
Affordable Housing				
One	72	2	74	19.9%
Two	62	1	63	17.0%
Three	94	1	95	25.6%
Four	56		56	15.1%
Five	83		83	22.4%
Total	367	4	371	100.0%
Highways and Roads (Including Streetlights, Parking and Street Cleaning)				
One	108	3	111	28.5%
Two	89	1	90	23.1%
Three	106		106	27.2%
Four	45		45	11.6%
Five	37		37	9.5%
Total	385	4	389	100.0%
Climate Emergency				
One	113	1	114	29.8%
Two	61	1	62	16.2%
Three	80	2	82	21.4%
Four	52		52	13.6%
Five	73		73	19.1%
Total	379	4	383	100.0%
Community Safety (Including Antisocial Behaviour)				
One	131	3	134	34.8%
Two	95	1	96	24.9%
Three	90		90	23.4%
Four	38		38	9.9%
Five	27		27	7.0%
Total	381	4	385	100.0%
Rough Sleeping and Homelessness				
One	93	3	96	25.5%
Two	75		75	19.9%
Three	99	1	100	26.6%
Four	35		35	9.3%
Five	70		70	18.6%
Total	372	4	376	100.0%
Regeneration (Including Economic Growth and Job Creation)				
One	91		91	23.9%

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Two	84	2	86	22.6%
Three	97	1	98	25.8%
Four	51		51	13.4%
Five	53	1	54	14.2%
Total	376	4	380	100.0%
Public Health (Including addressing Health Inequalities)				
One	95	3	98	26.1%
Two	78	1	79	21.0%
Three	106		106	28.2%
Four	49		49	13.0%
Five	44		44	11.7%
Total	372	4	376	100.0%
Environmental Health				
One	86	1	87	23.2%
Two	93	3	96	25.6%
Three	112		112	29.9%
Four	46		46	12.3%
Five	34		34	9.1%
Total	371	4	375	100.0%
Leisure Services (Including Leisure Centres and Golf Courses)				
One	107	1	108	28.1%
Two	83	2	85	22.1%
Three	74		74	19.2%
Four	46		46	11.9%
Five	71	1	72	18.7%
Total	381	4	385	100.0%
Museums				
One	67	1	68	18.3%
Two	72	2	74	19.9%
Three	113		113	30.4%
Four	49		49	13.2%
Five	67	1	68	18.3%
Total	368	4	372	100.0%
Parks and Open Spaces				
One	153	2	155	39.0%
Two	87	1	88	22.2%
Three	82		82	20.7%
Four	28		28	7.1%
Five	43	1	44	11.1%
Total	393	4	397	100.0%

Q3 How important are these priorities? - data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
A Sustainable Environment – e.g., tackling climate crisis				
One	165	2	167	31.3%
Two	104	1	105	19.7%
Three	129	1	130	24.4%
Four	61		61	11.4%
Five	70		70	13.1%
Total	529	4	533	100.0%
Brighter Futures – e.g., helping children and families				
One	163	3	166	31.4%
Two	146		146	27.7%
Three	97	1	98	18.6%
Four	61		61	11.6%
Five	57		57	10.8%
Total	524	4	528	100.0%
An Inclusive Economy – e.g., supporting jobs and businesses				
One	106	2	108	20.4%
Two	165	2	167	31.5%
Three	149		149	28.1%
Four	62		62	11.7%
Five	44		44	8.3%
Total	526	4	530	100.0%
Safe and Pleasant Communities – e.g., being safe where we live				
One	241	3	244	46.2%
Two	131	1	132	25.0%
Three	69		69	13.1%
Four	32		32	6.1%
Five	51		51	9.7%
Total	524	4	528	100.0%
Active and Healthy Lives – e.g., helping people live independently				
One	166	3	169	31.8%
Two	136	1	137	25.8%
Three	120		120	22.6%
Four	53		53	10.0%
Five	52		52	9.8%
Total	527	4	531	100.0%

Q4 Sustainable Environment data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Continue to respond to the climate emergency				
One	174	1	175	33.0%
Two	105	1	106	20.0%
Three	118	1	119	22.5%
Four	51		51	9.6%
Five	79		79	14.9%
Total	527	3	530	100.0%
Protection of our local environment				
One	220	1	221	41.8%
Two	140	2	142	26.8%
Three	83		83	15.7%
Four	42		42	7.9%
Five	41		41	7.8%
Total	526	3	529	100.0%
Keep working to improve street cleanliness				
One	169	2	171	32.5%
Two	166	1	167	31.7%
Three	105		105	20.0%
Four	50		50	9.5%
Five	33		33	6.3%
Total	523	3	526	100.0%
Support increased use of active travel (walking and cycling) networks				
One	128	1	129	24.3%
Two	117	1	118	22.3%
Three	137	1	138	26.0%
Four	75		75	14.2%
Five	70		70	13.2%
Total	527	3	530	100.0%

Q5 Stronger & brighter futures data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Continue to ensure our children and young people become the best adults they can be				
One	235	1	236	45.0%
Two	101	1	102	19.5%
Three	82	1	83	15.8%
Four	39		39	7.4%
Five	64		64	12.2%
Total	521	3	524	100.0%
Ensure our children and young people have equal access to educational opportunities				
One	245	2	247	47.0%
Two	104	1	105	20.0%
Three	72		72	13.7%
Four	34		34	6.5%
Five	67		67	12.8%
Total	522	3	525	100.0%
Take every opportunity to raise the aspirations of all our children and young people				
One	229	2	231	44.2%
Two	105	1	106	20.3%
Three	89		89	17.0%
Four	36		36	6.9%
Five	61		61	11.7%
Total	520	3	523	100.0%

Q6 Inclusive Economy data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Creating community wealth and social value				
One	124	1	125	23.9%
Two	156	2	158	30.2%
Three	128		128	24.4%
Four	65		65	12.4%
Five	48		48	9.2%
Total	521	3	524	100.0%
Supporting local businesses and job creation				
One	150	1	151	28.7%
Two	157	2	159	30.2%
Three	118		118	22.4%
Four	61		61	11.6%
Five	37		37	7.0%
Total	523	3	526	100.0%
Developing quality, affordable sustainable homes				
One	118	2	120	22.9%
Two	106	1	107	20.4%
Three	142		142	27.0%
Four	84		84	16.0%
Five	72		72	13.7%
Total	522	3	525	100.0%
Delivering regeneration, transport, and growth ambitions				
One	133	1	134	25.4%
Two	141	2	143	27.1%
Three	149		149	28.3%
Four	56		56	10.6%
Five	45		45	8.5%
Total	524	3	527	100.0%

Q7 Safe & Pleasant Communities data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Working with partner agencies to reduce crime and tackle anti-social behaviour				
One	275	2	277	52.3%
Two	108	1	109	20.6%
Three	59		59	11.1%
Four	34		34	6.4%
Five	51		51	9.6%
Total	527	3	530	100.0%
Tackling rough sleeping and homelessness				
One	152	2	154	29.2%
Two	119		119	22.5%
Three	124	1	125	23.7%
Four	65		65	12.3%
Five	65		65	12.3%
Total	525	3	528	100.0%
Delivering everyday neighbourhoods services to the best possible standard				
One	199	1	200	38.0%
Two	155	2	157	29.8%
Three	92		92	17.5%
Four	34		34	6.5%
Five	44		44	8.3%
Total	524	3	527	100.0%

Q8 Active and Healthy Lives data table

Importance	Online responses	Paper responses	Total responses	Percent
Working collaboratively with our partner agencies to improve mental wellbeing				
One	179	3	182	34.6%
Two	144	1	145	27.6%
Three	97		97	18.4%
Four	44		44	8.4%
Five	62		62	11.8%
Total	526		526	100.0%
Encouragement and help with active living				
One	137	2	139	26.3%
Two	162	1	163	30.8%
Three	127		127	24.0%
Four	57	1	58	11.0%
Five	42		42	7.9%
Total	525	4	529	100.0%
Supporting people to live independently				
One	158	3	161	30.5%
Two	150	1	151	28.6%
Three	123		123	23.3%
Four	50		50	9.5%
Five	43		43	8.1%
Total	524	4	528	100.0%
Deliver Public Health services to help people live healthy lifestyles				
One	148	4	152	28.7%
Two	152		152	28.7%
Three	120		120	22.6%
Four	67		67	12.6%
Five	39		39	7.4%
Total	526	4	530	100.0%
Tackle health inequalities				
One	161	4	165	31.4%
Two	116		116	22.1%
Three	126		126	24.0%
Four	68		68	12.9%
Five	51		51	9.7%
Total	522	4	526	100.0%



ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

26 JANUARY 2022

REPORT TITLE	LEGAL INPUT INTO MAJOR REGENERATION PROJECTS
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report is produced further to a request from this Committee at its meeting of October 2021.

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan:

- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations; and
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families.

This matter has no ward implications.

This is not a key decision as the report is provided to enable the Committee to have oversight of legal progress on various major regeneration projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to receive the contents of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee at its meeting of October 2021 requested (amongst other matters) regular updates on legal risk and project profile, for which the first of these is attached as Appendices 2 and 3 for this Committee's consideration. Appendices 2 and 3 are exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information).
- 1.2 The debate and corporate risk profile raised at the above Committee meeting centred on the LGA 'Planning Improvement Peer Challenge – Follow Up Review of July 2020'. This was due to the peer review being referenced on a slide presentation of the timeline to delivery.
- 1.3 The risks associated with the broader regeneration programme have been identified via a series of external reports for Wirral Council. These are the LGA Peer Review of 2019, the Wirral Planning Peer Review (follow up) of July 2020 and the Wirral External Assurance Review of September 2021.
- 1.4 The comments and recommendations have been picked up by the Council, in seeking to meet the legal resource needed in this area and the skills gap that adopting a regeneration programme of this scale and size creates, in acting to bolster the in-house resource for direct services and governance and seek specialist support in managing external legal services.
- 1.5 The approach to resourcing legal support to the various commercial negotiations, procurement exercises and land, development and funding agreements and transactions that will comprise the Left Bank Regeneration Programme has been to develop an 'intelligent client' model for general counsel. Following a procurement process conducted in 2021, this model is supported by a strategic legal partner to better enable the Council to put in place specialist and other support from the wider legal marketplace.
- 1.6 A key component of the approach is forward planning amongst the various professional officers to identify commercial and legal issues in advance and create legal briefs to respond to need and to manage legal delivery, costs and risk. The recommendations within this report are designed to enable the Committee to have a better understanding of the status of the Council's major regeneration projects and the legal input required to bring them forward.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Given that this report is provided at the request of Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee and is for information, no other options are suggested.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 A Local Government Association peer review of 2019 contained a recommendation that the Council should, “Ensure appropriate governance to take risk aware approach regarding legal and procurement processes to deliver growth.”
- 3.2 In July 2020 a Wirral Planning Peer Review follow up reported that: “There has been little progress on this issue. The Peer Team have to report that there remain serious concerns about how the Council’s Legal team continues to support the Wirral Growth agenda and reference is made to the situation deteriorating. This is one of the key risks to the Council achieving its ambitions moving forward.”
- 3.3 An External Assurance Review was commissioned by the Secretary of State and included a Governance report submitted in September 2021. The Council has accepted the comments and recommendations and produced a plan to implement them, an action endorsed by full Council. In the report it is stated in section 7 that: “An area of risk, however, is ensuring that there is sufficient financial and legal expertise assigned to the very complex and fast-moving delivery and investment vehicles in regeneration. Pleasure at seeing external funding secured and schemes progressing after many years of false starts may be bringing a degree of optimism that clouds a rigorous and healthily sceptical view of the financial risks.”
- 3.4 The Department of Law and Governance has been through a service redesign with associated investment in 2018/19, with recruitment in 2019/20 onwards and a trainee solicitor programme. The re-design places 4 Principal Lawyers (3 appointed) to manage teams in related disciplines supported by a Consultant Lawyer and Practice Manager. Recruitment of Principal Lawyers (managers) has created a more ‘business partner’ focussed set of services. One of the principal lawyers (the Lead Principal Lawyer Regeneration Planning and Property) is tasked with managing the legal input into the overall regeneration programme and be the keystone for the intelligent client role.
- 3.5 However, a high number of vacancies is still an issue and a pressured environment remains, particularly in respect of regeneration, with continuing reliance on less economic or effective use of outsourcing and/or locums as a result. At the time of writing this report there are a number of interviews of candidates for these key roles pending
- 3.6 The Regeneration and Place officers, through and with the assistance of external consultants and Homes England, have produced a list of projects to consider in terms of funding, land ownership, procurement and development needs. This has been developed into a matrix which sets out the current status of the projects and programmes which legal services has been instructed upon. It also provides information about matters on which legal services has not yet been instructed.

- 3.7 The Council to date has had a piecemeal approach to the commissioning of external legal required to support several regeneration projects that are already ongoing. There have in the last two years been as many as eight separate legal firms instructed on eleven projects at any one time. This is not helpful to the overall understanding of the needs of the regeneration programme or of managing on delivery, costs and risk management. This piecemeal approach will, when scaled up, lead to duplication and increased cost. There is a need for a targeted manageable response to meet the needs of Wirral's regeneration requirements as a whole.
- 3.8 The Council has identified the need to develop its role as "intelligent client". The role of the intelligent client is key to the legal success of major projects. The management of external law firms is a central part of a general counsel role to:
- ask the right questions;
 - understand and test the answers;
 - see the gaps or to interpret those answers for the purposes of the culture and understanding of the organisation;
 - challenge, understand and properly manage costs.
- 3.9 In order to enable legal services to have the capacity to fulfil the intelligent client role, it has, with the assistance of the procurement team, obtained the services of a strategic legal partner with a view to it:
- assisting in the development of strategic advice as to the resourcing of projects and a developing road map for future projects including an analysis of resource requirements and a robust approach to risk management;
 - advising the Council on the briefs on which it should be seeking to issue with invitations to tender for the legal work on various regeneration work streams;
 - to assisting the Council in managing and monitoring the output of firms that have been appointed to regeneration work streams; and
 - demonstrating added value to the council in the form of training, secondment opportunities, precedent sharing and know how.
- 3.10 The procurement process ran from early 2021. Group spokespersons from the ERD Committee were invited to a set of interviews with finalist law firms alongside officers of Regeneration and Place and the assessing lawyers. The contract was awarded to Trowers and Hamlins LLP (www.trowers.com).
- 3.11 Trowers and Hamlins have begun working with officers in three key areas:
- (a) To take a view on the forthcoming projects to prioritise required legal input and to prepare a specification to go out to the legal market. As projects develop this will include assisting the in-house team in peer reviewing the work undertaken and the costs charging;
 - (b) To undertake direct work where there is an urgent need and to assist the in-house team where there are capacity gaps, including vacancies, peak flow and skills transfer;

(c) To undertake direct work where there is a need for strategic input from a point of understanding.

- 3.12 This process outlined in paragraph 3.11 of this report is described in the flowchart attached as Appendix 1 to this report. A key component of the approach is forward preparation between various professional officers to identify legal issues in advance and create briefs to respond to need and to manage legal delivery, costs and risk. This is to be the subject of regular sharing with this Committee, through a reporting matrix. The first of the reporting matrices is attached to this report as Appendix 2. The Legal Brief Matrix with confidential items is attached to this report as Appendix 3. The legal costs relating to the reporting Matrix is attached to this report as Appendix 4.
- 3.13 Appendices 3 and 4 are exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information).
- 3.14 It is suggested that the information set out within this report should provide the Committee with assurance that sufficient steps have been taken to enable the Council to proceed with its regeneration programmes with appropriate legal support (whether provided internally or with external solicitors or a combination of both).

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost incurred in the current financial year terms of both internal and external solicitors and counsel are set out in the exempt appendix 4 to this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As this report is for information there are no substantive legal implications arising out of the proposals set out within this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 6.1 As this report is for information there are no substantive ICT Staffing and Assets implications arising out of the proposals set out within this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The management of risks to the Council come in the form of managing the risks to delivery, as well as managing the commercial and financial risks and the risks for proper governance and legality
- 7.2 These risks can be managed by having the correct capacity and skill-set available to be 'at the table' and to 'make the deal'. This is distinct from the delivery of restricted legal services or transactional drafting but is about

providing the right legal advice to the Council to capture what risks and eventualities there might be, to mitigate those and to make their management a part of the structure of any agreement.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation has not been undertaken on the proposals within this report given that it is essentially for information. .

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

9.2. Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the project and programmes that legal services are involved with as described within this report may need to be assessed and any equality issues mitigated in terms of any negative impact that may emerge.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environment or climate implications arising from the proposals set out within this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

11.1 There are no Community Wealth Building implications arising from the proposals set out within this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Matthew Neal
Lead Principal Lawyer- Regeneration, Planning and Property
Department of Law and Governance
matthewneal@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Flowchart setting out the initial process to outsourcing of matter as agreed with Trowers and Hamblins |
| Appendix 2 | Legal Brief Matrix |
| Appendix 3 | Legal Brief Matrix with confidential items* |
| Appendix 4 | Costings information relevant to the Legal Brief Matrix*. |

* Appendices 3 and 4 are exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information).

Appendix A Flowchart setting out the initial process to outsourcing of matter as agreed with Trowers and Hamlins.

Appendix B Legal Brief Matrix.

Appendix C Legal Brief Matrix with confidential items.*

Appendix D Costings information relevant to the Legal Brief Matrix*.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

LGA peer review of 2019

July 2020 Wirral Planning Peer Review follow up report

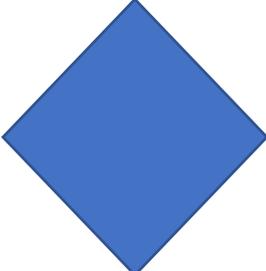
Wirral External Assurance Review

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Economy Regeneration and Development Committee	October 2021

Appendix 1

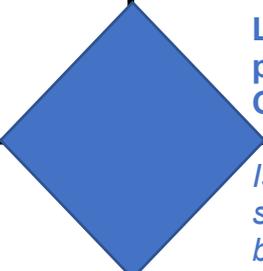
Project or business case being developed.
Referred by Directorate through programme board or ICB for legal input



Initial legal assessment

Is there capacity for this to be dealt with by the in-house legal team?

Managing lawyer authorises Legal Brief to be prepared by in-house regen and legal officers with T&H through triage process – Default to be made ready for marketplace/external legal services



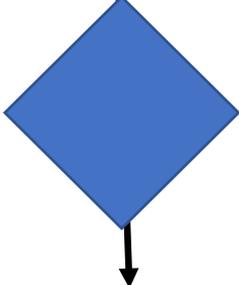
Legal Brief is assessed for procurement from NWL Consortium, CCS or other marketplace

Is this too urgent or requires separate strategic advice or other step before being able to be issued for procurement?

Appoint T&H separately to provide strategic advice work arising out of legal brief.

Appoint T&H separately to carry out urgent work or support in-house team on basis of legal brief (or HoT).

External legal services to achieve the Legal Brief outcomes procured through consortia market by managing lawyer working with regen officers and T&H



Appointment & Review

External legal supplier engaged to conduct the work to the Legal Brief

Appointed lawyers conduct the work according to the Legal Brief on behalf of client officers
Managing Lawyer receives bills for approval and monitoring updates
Managing Lawyer involved again only on exception reporting, closure report or any requirement for decision and/or MO issue.

ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 26 JANUARY 2022



REGENERATION CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED LEGAL REQUIREMENTS 2022/23

6 January 2021

Ongoing Matters Project Title	Regeneration, Development Programme or Project	Type of legal support and request	Regen Team Contact Officer (internal & external)	Legal Manager (in-house officer with conduct)	External Legal Support	Anticipated additional future support	Legal Risk RAG rating*	Comments / notes on progress & issues (<i>non-exempt information</i>)
Birkenhead Commercial District Offices phase 1	Central Birkenhead	Council to occupy building A1. Lease(s) for Occupiers Building A2 will be required. The lease is unconditional	Sally Shah	Matthew Neal.	DLA completed the agreement for lease. Legal Services dealt with the completion of the lease (once it had gone unconditional) Brabners dealt with	On-going legal support to draft/manage lease issues likely to be generated from Council's management of buildings A1/A2. (A1 included at this stage to cover scenario of both buildings being let on open market.	Green	Managing of buildings A1/A2 will be led by Asset Management with Regeneration support.

					the s106 agreement relating to the hybrid planning consent. associated lease.	The removal of the market from the scope of the proposed development may need an amendment the s106 and/or variation of the planning consent which would need legal advice and representation		
Dock Branch Park	Birkenhead Central	Acquisition of land from Network Rail, advice on any liabilities (e.g., highway bridges over the route of the line), land acquisition strategy including potential CPOL advice, land referencing, planning advice and procurement in terms of contractor appointments, subsidy control advice on any grant funding agreements and back to	Cathy Palmer	Matthew Neal	Internal at present. Internal legal team are carrying out detailed title investigation of the site.	Support on all legal elements identified. It is anticipated that implementing any land assembly strategy will be dealt with by external firm with advice on the brief and procurement approach	Green	The area of Dock Branch Park has upwards of 35 third property land interest.

		back grant funding agreement. Proposal for transport shed with National Museums Liverpool as an end user will need subsidy control advice as well as commercial property support.				being obtained from Trowers.		
Egerton Village (WWIF)	Wirral Waters	Grant Funding Agreement between the Council and Peel Land and Property. Subsidy control advice to ensure that the arrangements are lawful.	Alison Pritchard	Colin Hughes	DWF have advised on subsidy control	Grant funding agreement awaited from Peel.	Green	£1.75m WWIF grant approved. Planning permission in place, Peel speaking to potential contractors re start in early 2022 and drawdown of grant commencing late 21/22.
Hind Street Birkenhead	Birkenhead Central	Advice on legal structure for collaboration, with major landowners and other landowners, including site due diligence and land acquisition strategy. Advice also on subsidy control and grant funding. Acquisition of National Grid land	Sally Shah	Matthew Neal	DWF	Formal collaboration agreement, Conditional sale and purchase contract and any necessary compulsory acquisition.	Green	Further grant funding will be required.
Legacy	Wirral Waters	Agreement for lease and negotiation of a deed of variation to deal with	Sally Shah	Matthew Neal	DWF dealing with deed of variation.	Drawn down of 50-year lease after 10	Green	Council acquiring 50-year lease with initial 10-year

		amendments of various warranties				years from first occupation. Agreement reached as to warranties as to the condition of the dock wall.		leaseback to Peel (Legacy).
Maritime Knowledge Hub	Wirral Waters	Forward Funding Agreement/Agreement for Lease and Lease Subsidy Control Procurement advice Tax advice Inter departmental "loan". Operator appointment/market consultation/procurement	Helen Carney	Colin Hughes	DWF on commercial property, subsidy control and procurement and financial structuring and procurement route.	Grant Funding Agreement for SIF grant from LCRCA is awaited pending evidence being supplied of significant commercial interest in leases for the premises being taken up. Transaction will be dealt with internally Procurement and appointment of Operator when scheme	Green	£23m development. Council acquiring 250yr lease. Planning anticipated in 21/22, start on site anticipated in early 2022. £2.2m WWIF grant approved. Drawdown of grant commencing 21/22 Soft market testing of interest for future operator of the innovation hub has been completed. Operator appointment is dependent on the project proceeding

						nearing completion		and Agreement for lease conditions being satisfied. Grant funding has been secured for ERDF: £965,462 LCRCA SIF: £676,146
New Ferry Regeneration Project	New Ferry	Land assembly and CPO advice and transactions	David Ball	Anne Quirk	Not applicable	Commercial property transactions to acquire land by agreement. CPO proceedings for land not so secured	Green	P and R Committee approved in principle a CPO in March 2021 and commencement of procurement process for Development Partner. Report being brought to ERD seeking authority to appoint development partner in Jan 22 arising from competitive dialogue.
Towns Fund projects x 12	Birkenhead	Grant Funding Agreements and any ongoing subsidy control issues.	Bev Staniford	Andrea Lowe	None as of yet.	Potential Subsidy control issues.	Green	Instructions have been provided and matter is progressing.

Forthcoming Matters Project Title	Regeneration, Development Programme or Project	Type of legal support and request	Regen Team Contact Officer (internal & external)	Legal Manager (in-house officer with conduct)	External Legal Support	Anticipated additional future support	Legal Risk RAG rating*	Comments / notes on progress & issues (<i>non-exempt information</i>)
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District Heat Network	Wirral Waters	District Heating Network Birkenhead. Contract to appoint technical, financial and legal consultants to prepare business case with a view to securing approval to proceed with the development of a heat network. It outlines requirements covering technical, legal, financial and commercial disciplines. Whilst some consultancies may be able to provide relevant expertise in more than one area, it is unlikely that one organisation alone	Emma Hopkins	Matthew Neal	Trowers to produce legal brief with substantive work to be carried out by a firm to be procured. .	Grant funding, Subsidy control, regulatory requirements for energy, commercial property transactions,	Not applicable.	Scoping of project needs completing.
Expo Village	Hamilton Park	Development agreement along with commercial property support in terms of land assembly or collaboration (the land is currently partly owned by the Council and Wirral Methodist Housing Association. Advice on compliance with previous grant funding agreement and potential clawback. Procurement advice on	Cathy Palmer	Matthew Neal	All internal to date.	Other than the identified items, further matters for advice have not yet been scoped.	Not applicable	Officers currently considering delivery options.

		appointment of operator for the Expo. Advice on onward grant funding arrangements to ensure compliance with Towns Fund Grant requirements.						
Land Registry	Waterfront	Acquisition and Heads of Terms, supported by grant funding.	Cathy Palmer	Matthew Neal	None as of yet	Potential land contamination issues and associated warranties or indemnities a part of any commercial property transaction support.	Not applicable.	Heads of Terms have not yet been agreed by ERD / P and R Committee
Sustainability Central Hub	Wirral Waters	Grant funding agreement	Cathy Palmer	Not applicable	Not applicable.	Legal support will be required for Towns Fund grant funding agreement. A decision will be taken in due course as to how to resource that. etc	Not applicable	Site in MEA Park west, part of Towns Fund, grant to Peel L&P – concept stage, requires business case to be developed
Sustainable Urban Drainage	Wirral waters	Land Acquisition	Cathy Palmer	Not applicable	Not applicable	Commercial property work to legally	Not applicable.	Landscape scheme on Beaufort Road/Wallasey

scheme land acquisition						acquire the land.		Bridge Road land needs to be acquired from Network Rail, Peel failed to reach agreement
Woodside Gyratory	Waterfront	Acquisition of land	Cathy Palmer	Matthew Neal	Not yet scoped.	Potential grant funding arrangements.	Not applicable.	Project is at formative stage at present with no substantive legal advice required as of yet.

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ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 26 January 2022

REPORT TITLE:	ECONOMY REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee. It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee are invited to agree or otherwise determine the content of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee work programme which is proposed in this report for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 A number of workplan formats were explored, with the current framework open to amendment to match the requirements of the Committee

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:
- The Council Plan
 - The Council's transformation programme
 - The Council's Forward Plan
 - Service performance information
 - Risk management information
 - Public or service user feedback
 - Referrals from Council

Terms of Reference

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee has responsibility for developing and delivering a vision for Wirral as a place. It is responsible for developing and determining or recommending all planning and transport policies, including the Local Plan, and infrastructure planning. It is also responsible for promoting regeneration, economic development and associated activities, including the tourism, culture and visitor economy, and for removing barriers to growth.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:

- (a) development and delivery of the Council's strategic objectives for planning, sustainability and transportation;
- (b) developing and recommending those plans and strategies which together comprise the Local Plan;
- (c) developing and adopting or recommending (if reserved to Council) other spatial planning documents, including but not limited to
- (i) supplementary planning documents (SPD) and planning policy advice notes;
 - (ii) Master Plans and development briefs;

(iii) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and

(iv) [The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when applicable];

(d) economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure, enterprise, skills and seeking, securing and managing external funds to achieve that, directly or in partnership with joint ventures and external companies or bodies as well as with the Combined Authority and government bodies;

(e) the Council's functions and partnerships regarding the promotion of economic growth and the establishment and development of business;

(f) the promotion and development of the economic factors in the area, such as seeking to ensure sufficient and appropriate employment sites, investment, adult skills, apprenticeship schemes, productivity, development sites and so forth;

(g) overseeing the progress of major projects (including major building, infrastructure or other projects involving the erection or significant alteration of major permanent structures or landmarks) undertaken by the Council directly or as enabler, funder or joint enterprise partner, including but not limited to the Wirral Growth Company LLP

(h) reviewing major projects and any project boards having regard to capacity to deliver, corporate priorities and resources, and advise the Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate;

(i) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and

(j) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising as a result of work programme items.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising as a result of work programme items

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct implications to staffing, ICT or Assets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Committee's ability to undertake its responsibility to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, make decisions on policies, co-ordinate spend, and maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets may be compromised if it does not have the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Not applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

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

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications. However, there may be implications arising as a result of work programme items.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Anna Perret**
(Senior Democratic Services Officer)
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Work Programme update

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee	26th October 2020



ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

January 2022

Item	Key Decision Yes/No	Lead Officer
Disposal of industrial estate - Quarrybank	Yes	Alan Evans
Revised Local Development Scheme	Yes	Alan Evans
Sustainable Urban Development – Work package 7	Yes	Alan Evans
Acquisition of former Co-op	Yes	Alan Evans
Appointment of a preferred developer for the New Ferry redevelopment scheme	Yes	Alan Evans
Legal Input into major Regeneration projects	No	Matthew Neal
2022/23 Budget update	No	Shaer Halewood
Work programme Update	No	Mike Jones/ Anna Perrett

Key decisions – to be scheduled

Item	Key Decision	Lead Departmental Officer	Wirral Plan Priority
Birkenhead Market	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'

Application for Financial Assistance	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone Investment Fund	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Liverpool City Region Economic Initiatives and Funding	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Programme for England (2014-2020)	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Devolution Funding	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Birkenhead Town Centre Masterplan	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Hind Street Regeneration Strategy	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Hind Street Movement Strategy	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Local Development Scheme	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Preferred developer for residential development on Europa Boulevard site	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Wirral Growth Company Final Site Development Plans for Moreton and Bromborough	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
St Werburgh's Masterplan	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Preferred developer for residential development on former HoF site	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Department for Transport Active Travel Programme	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Liverpool City Region Transport initiatives and Funding programmes	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Liverpool City Region Cycling Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP)- Birkenhead to New Brighton	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Investment Plan	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Birkenhead Heat Network	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'

Future High Streets Fund Projects	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Dock Branch Park Masterplan	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Dock Branch Park - Appointment of Technical Team	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Active Travel Strategy	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Parking Strategy	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Tower Road South Development	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Preferred Developer to Deliver the New Ferry Regeneration	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Wirral Mass Transit Business Case	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Submission of Outline Business Case for Homes England Funding	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Electric Vehicles Strategy	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Acceptance of Levelling Up Funding - Waterfront	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Birkenhead Waterfront	Yes	Alan Evans	'Inclusive Economy'
Towns / High Street Funding	Yes	Alan Evans	Inclusive Economy
LCR Freeport	Yes	Alan Evans	Inclusive Economy

STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS

Item	Reporting Frequency	Lead Departmental Officer
Financial Monitoring Report	TBC	Shaer Halewood
Regen Committee Work Programme Update	TBC	Committee Team
Public questions	Each meeting	

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress
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Working Groups/ Sub Committees				
Active Travel				
Task and Finish Reviews				
-	-	--		-
Spotlight Sessions and Workshops				
Eureka!	Workshop	TBC	Bev Staniford	Conclude d
Mass Transit				
Parking Strategy				
LCWIP				

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

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