



Policy and Resources Committee

Date: Wednesday, 9 June 2021

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Venue: Floral Pavilion, New Brighton

Members of the public are encouraged to view the meeting via the webcast, (see below) but for anyone who would like to attend in person, please contact the box office at the Floral Pavilion by telephone on 0151 666 0000, in advance of the meeting. All those attending will be asked to wear a face covering (unless exempt) and are encouraged to take a Lateral Flow Test before attending. You should not attend if you have tested positive for Coronavirus or if you have any symptoms of Coronavirus.

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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 - 26)**

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 17 and 24 March, 2021.

5. **LEADER'S UPDATE**

The Leader and Chief Executive will give a verbal update on the latest Covid-19 situation in the borough.

6. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

6a. Public Questions

Notice of questions to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Friday, 4 June, 2021 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

6b. Statements and Petitions

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Friday, 4 June, 2021 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.

6c. Questions by Members

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

SECTION A - KEY AND OTHER DECISIONS

- 7. COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING UPDATE (Pages 27 - 62)**
- 8. USE OF COUNCIL BUILDINGS FOR CIVIC, COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS (Pages 63 - 72)**
- 9. APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS (Pages 73 - 82)**

SECTION B - BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 10. CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND UPDATE (Pages 83 - 96)**
- 11. 2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING AND 22/23 BUDGET PROCESS (Pages 97 - 114)**

SECTION C - WORK PROGRAMME / OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

12. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 115 - 126)

SECTION D - REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES / COUNCIL

13. REFERRALS FROM COUNCIL

**13a. Motion - Support for British Values Locally
(Pages 127 – 129)**

13b. Motion - Community Investment Bonds (Page 131)

13c. Motion - Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Pages 133 – 134)

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 March 2021

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors T Anderson A Leech
C Carubia M McLaughlin
P Cleary J McManus
W Clements Y Nolan
P Gilchrist L Rennie
JE Green C Spriggs
EA Grey P Stuart
A Hodson T Usher

75 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

76 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

77 **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.

Councillor Anita Leech declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 9, 'Agreement of Capital Grant included within Capital Programme (3G Pitch) by virtue of a family connection, and that she would leave the virtual meeting room during the item's consideration.

78 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February, 2021, be approved and adopted as a correct record.

79 **LEADER'S UPDATE**

The Chair gave an update on the latest COVID-19 situation in the Borough. Wirral, in line with the national picture had suffered 2 waves of COVID-19 with periods of sustained and unprecedented pressure on health and care services. With the December 2020 and January 2021 surge being the worst of the pandemic to date.

To date in Wirral, there had been over 22,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (although this would be an underestimate of the true spread of the disease as not all would have been tested), and tragically 939 deaths (up to 26/02/2021). The impacts of COVID-19 in Wirral had not been felt equally – the pandemic had both exposed and exacerbated longstanding inequalities between and within Wirral’s local communities.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme while a game changer was not a silver bullet. The information so far on the vaccines in use was that they were highly effective and encouraging high uptake of the vaccine should reduce hospitalisations and deaths - and the pressures on health and care services.

It will still be several months before the vaccine is rolled out to all adults; although rates locally are reducing, they remain higher than Wirral would like and higher than other regions across the country. The Council therefore needs to take a cautious approach and continue to work collectively to reduce community transmission and manage outbreaks in community settings. As has been seen previously, community transmission can increase very quickly (as it did in March, September and late December) unless a cautious approach is taken.

The Local Outbreak Management Plan had been updated to ensure Wirral’s outbreak responses and health and care system were prepared for further surges in COVID-19, the emergence of new COVID-19 variants, and a potential surge in other respiratory viruses in Autumn / Winter 2021-22.

Paul Sator, Chief Executive, thanked all staff, Head teachers, teachers and parents for the smooth return of children to schools, as the first milestone on the roadmap out of lockdown, but emphasised the need to remain cautious on the road to recovery. He also thanked all those staff involved in the testing and vaccination programme and with outbreak management and food distribution.

80 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that no questions from either members of the public or Members had been submitted. Nor were there any statements or petitions to receive.

81 **PAY POLICY 2021-2022**

Tony Williams, Assistant Director: HR and Organisational Development, introduced a report on the Council’s Pay Policy. Its purpose was to provide transparency with regard to the Council’s approach to setting pay by identifying:

- The methods by which salaries of all employees were determined;

- The detail and level of the salary package of its most senior staff;
- The Head of Paid Service's responsibility for ensuring that the provisions set out in the statement were applied consistently throughout the Council and recommending any amendments to Full Council.

The Council was required by Section 38 of The Localism Act 2011 to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year.

The 2021/22 statement reflected key changes and updates that had occurred within the last financial year as follows, including a new Foundation Living Wage rate, announced by The Living Wage Foundation in November 2020, as £9.50 per hour, an increase of 20p. The Pay Policy Statement 2021-2022 had also been updated to reflect the constitutional changes made in line with the new Committee System of governance.

RECOMMENDED – To Council the approval of the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2021/22.

82 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT

Tony Williams, Assistant Director: HR and Organisational Development, introduced a report on the Gender Pay Gap. In line with the Equality Act 2010, the purpose of the report was to provide transparency with regard to the average difference between earnings of women and men.

The Council's median gender pay gap for 2019 was 10.9% which compared favourably to the national average of 15.5% for other public sector organisations. In 2020 Wirral's median gender pay gap had improved from 10.9% to 4.8%, whilst the mean gender pay gap also narrowed from 6.9% to 4.9%.

The gender profile was unchanged for the third consecutive year and there was no significant shift in the gender quartile profiles except in the upper quartile where there was an increase in the percentage of females from 56% in 2019 to 61% in 2020. This reversed the trend of the previous year which saw an increase in the percentage of males in the upper quartile from 42.8% to 44.5%.

Responding to comments from Members, Tony Williams stated that there were a whole myriad of different working patterns which contributed to the gender pay gap, including the higher percentage of females in part time, or reduced hours roles, with the vast majority of these roles being in Leisure Centres and libraries.

Resolved – That the publication of the Gender Pay Gap report be endorsed and noted.

83 **AGREEMENT OF CAPITAL GRANT INCLUDED WITHIN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME (3G PITCH)**

Prior to consideration of this item, Councillor Anita Leech, left the virtual meeting room, having declared a personal interest (see minute 77 ante).

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, introduced a report regarding a contribution to the construction of a 3G pitch at the Tranmere Rovers Training Facility at Solar Campus, Leasowe.

In September 2019 the Council had entered into a Partnering Agreement with the Club that highlighted the Council's good historic relationships and ambition to work together for the benefit of the residents of the Borough. The Club was a key anchor institution within Wirral and provided many functions that supported the Council's 2025 plan. In 2018, with the knowledge of a deficit of 3G football pitches across Wirral, the Club and the Council had talked about working together to align an initiative to jointly fund the construction of a 3G football pitch at the Solar Campus site costing £799,779.

The 2019/20 capital programme approved by Council on 4 March, 2019 included a scheme and budget for the contribution to Tranmere Rovers Football Club for just under 50% of the construction of such a pitch at a maximum total of £375,000. This scheme was the continuation of Tranmere Rovers' plan to relocate its training facilities from Ingleborough Road to the Solar Campus.

Planning consent was given for the construction of the pitch at the Planning Committee on 8 September, 2020, subject to nine conditions that were currently being implemented via a working group of residents, officers and Members.

The grant would be funded from the Council's existing capital programme, with the relevant conditions laid out in the grant agreement. As the revenue impact of the Capital Programme had already been included in the 2019/20 budget approved in March 2019, and carried forward, there were no additional financial implications for the Council taxpayer as a result of awarding the grant.

Shaer Halewood responded to a number of comments from Members and informed the meeting that any future replacement costs would need to be discussed at a future date between the Council and the Club.

Members placed on record their thanks to Tranmere Rovers as a club for all their work they had done in the community through the pandemic.

Councillor Cleary referred to a specific condition (No.9) made by the Planning Committee in its approval of the development, which was not referred to in the

report, and the need to ensure this along with the other conditions was implemented, this condition stated that:

'Prior to first use of the proposed development hereby approved, full details of secure covered and lockable cycle parking and / or storage facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These facilities shall be provided in accordance with the approved details and made available for use prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted and shall be retained for use at all times thereafter.'

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Spriggs, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the request from Tranmere Rovers Football Club Limited for a maximum contribution of £375,000 toward the costs of construction of a 3G pitch at the Solar Campus in line with the relevant Community User conditions set out in the Appendix to the Director's report, be approved;**
- (2) it be agreed that the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to draw up and finalise a legal agreement between the Council and Tranmere Rovers Football Club Limited to reflect the above arrangements.**

84 **NORTH WEST MUTUAL BANK**

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, introduced a report which updated Members on the possibility of setting up a North West Mutual Bank which Wirral Council, in conjunction with two partner Councils, Liverpool and Preston, had been supporting.

The Council at its meeting on 5 March, 2019 had agreed a £5m commitment in the capital programme 2019 – 2024 as an investment in the North West Mutual Community Bank. The proposal to create a Mutual aligned with the Community Wealth Building Strategy and if successfully implemented would help to retain financial resources within the region, provide social benefits and employment opportunities benefits and help tackle financial exclusion.

Shaer Halewood responded to a number of comments from Members and stated that there was no formal agreement yet with regard to the share of investment between the three Councils, but that the Committee could agree to Wirral's share being up to a third as a maximum amount. It was hoped that once the proposals were further developed other investors, such as Pension Funds, would be sourced, which would reduce the Council's overall investment of up to £5m.

Members expressed their support for the proposal, particularly with regard to the social benefits which would flow from the proposal, including for those residents who were financially excluded and for small and medium businesses.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was -

Resolved – That, subject to a satisfactory due diligence exercise review:

- (1) a commitment to jointly fund the costs / resources as outlined in paragraph 3.61 of the report and up to a maximum amount of £350,000, to take the North West Mutual to the banking licence application stage, subject to the outcome of the initial due diligence, be approved;**
- (2) a commitment to a further joint fund as specified in paragraph 3.63 of the report and up to a maximum of £200,000, to buy in to the use of intellectual property developed by other Mutuals, be approved;**
- (3) it be agreed to enter into a cost sharing arrangement with other Councils for the purpose of the above, up to a maximum amount of £185,000 if an equal three-way division of funding is applied; and**
- (4) a further report be brought to Policy and Resources Committee once the next stage is completed and prior to any investment decision with the North West Mutual.**

85 **CONSIDERATION OF GAINING REAL LIVING WAGE ACCREDITATION**

Keith Patterson, Head of Commercial Procurement, introduced a report which provided a further summary of the work being undertaken to explore gaining accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation, following a report to the former Cabinet on 27 July, 2020 (minute 114 refers).

The requirement to provide the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage was a statutory requirement and thus was already included in the Council's contracts. The Living Wage Foundation was an independent organisation that recognised the leadership of responsible employers who chose to pay a Real Living Wage based on the cost of living, not just the government minimum.

The report detailed the three key reasons why it was important to pay the Real Living Wage:

- Safeguarding workers from in-work poverty.
- Investing in the local economy.
- Demonstrating Civic Leadership.

It was estimated that the total cost to the Council of implementing the Real Living Wage was between £630,000 and £1.2m, (excluding care contracts) however individual contracts would be subject to discussion and would be managed according to procurement and contract management principles to deliver best value. A further report to the Committee would contain more information on those costs and the extent to which they could be mitigated.

Responding to comments from Members, Keith Patterson, stated that the set criteria for tender evaluations could not include whether or not contractors paid the Real Living Wage, though the question could be asked if they were prepared to pay the RLW, and tender documentation did emphasise that the Council was strongly in favour of the RLW and made it clear it was important to Wirral.

Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance, confirmed that there was nothing to stop the Council asking contractors whether or not they paid the RLW to build up a data profile, but tenders could not be scored on this criteria.

Members expressed the view that contractors should be expected to do the right thing in paying the RLW as it was a key factor in tackling low pay in the regional economy.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Yvonne Nolan, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the further activity undertaken in working towards accreditation to the Living Wage Foundation, be noted; and**
- (2) that a further report will be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee after further information is gathered in order to enable the Council to assess more accurately the costs and benefits of seeking accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation.**

86 **ANNUAL WORKFORCE MONITORING REPORT 2019/20**

Suzanne Moore, Head of Organisational Design and Development, introduced a report on the annual Workforce Equality Report for 2019/20. The Council had a legal duty under Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty April 2011 to produce and publish this annual report

As part of the summary action plan from the previous report, received by the former Employment and Appointments Committee on 3 March, 2020 (minute 26 refers) a targeted 'staff confidence' campaign was included to help narrow the gaps in data. This had now been undertaken and had seen an improvement in the level and detail of data collected which was detailed in the

report. The Council did respect employees' rights not to declare personal information and provided a 'prefer not to say' response in all categories.

Members welcomed the report which showed good progress and thanked the officers for all their work.

Members also expressed the view that such a report deserved a more detailed examination and suggested that governance arrangements could be reviewed with the possibility of re-establishing some form of Employment Sub-Committee.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Yvonne Nolan, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the publication of the annual Workforce Equality report to meet the Council's legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) 2011, be approved; and**
- (2) the position in relation to workforce equality performance and the progress made by the Council in relation to producing, analysing and publishing workforce data, be noted.**

87 **2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING AND 22/23 BUDGET PROCESS**

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, introduced a report which described how the 2021/22 budget would be monitored through the Committee system during the year and also the process for setting the 2022/23 budget. This would enable the Policy and Services Committees (the committees) to take ownership of their specific budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny of officers on the performance and management of those budgets. For the first committees in the new municipal year, each committee would receive a budget book detailed by function to enable committees to have oversight of where income and expenditure occurred.

Committees would be responsible for ensuring that the budget was spent responsibly and remained within the relevant envelope, identifying savings where possible. Officers would be accountable for providing best advice to committees. Policy and Resources Committee would be responsible for ensuring and advising the Council that the entire budget remained in balance at all times or provided mitigating actions to bring the budget back in line, should a deficit be forecast. The report detailed the information which would be provided.

With regard to the process for setting the 2022/23 budget, this would commence immediately. One of the key documents required to enable the

Council to receive approval for exceptional financial support was a balanced five-year medium term financial plan (MTFP).

A summary of this was provided in the budget report to the Committee on 17 February 2021. This document was prepared by officers and shared virtually with Policy and Resources Committee Members, and now required committee oversight and approval. Committees would consider whether the proposals included in the MTFP for the 2022/23 budget, and beyond, were to be taken forward or whether they were to be replaced by alternative proposals that the committees recommended. Any alternative proposals would be required to be tested against the Council's objectives of the Wirral Plan to ensure that resources were aligned to priorities and could demonstrate beneficial outcomes and value for money.

Each committee would be responsible for seeking best advice to identify, develop and agree savings proposals during the summer to ensure a draft balanced budget could be considered by this Committee in October 2021, to enable budget consultation to start in a timely manner following the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2021.

In respect of a proposed working group to convene to consider the content of the MTFP and make recommendations into the committees at their first meetings, the Chair suggested that this should be for the new Policy and Resources Committee to address, once established after the May elections.

In respect of the zero-based budgeting exercise for one of the committees to undertake it was important for a committee to be identified and it was suggested that this could be agreed outside of the meeting, between the political groups and officers.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the process for monitoring the 2021/22 in-year budget, be agreed;**
- (2) the process for the 2022/23 budget setting process, be agreed;**
- (3) that a joint working group be convened as soon as practicable, the membership to be drawn from the Policy and Resources Committee and agreed by Group Leaders; and**
- (4) the process for the Zero-Based Budgeting exercise in 2021/22 and the first committee(s) to undertake the process, fully supported by officers to enable a framework to be developed for other committees to follow, be agreed.**

88 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

A report by the Director of Law and Governance, advised how the Committee in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was 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 were within the remit of the Committee.

The work programme was formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Policy and Resources Committee was attached as an appendix to the report.

Resolved – That the proposed Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year, be noted.

89 **TRANSFORMING CARE THERAPEUTIC SHORT BREAKS CAPITAL PROPOSAL**

Councillor Wendy Clements, as Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 11 March, in respect of the Transforming Care Therapeutic Short Breaks Capital proposal. The report recommended the acceptance of capital grant monies of up to £700,000 from NHS England to enable the purchase by the Council of a property to be used for the purpose of providing a facility for children and young people with learning difficulties, autism and presenting mental health difficulties along with the delivery of suitable services to such occupants.

Simone White, Director of Children, Families and Education elaborated upon the contents of the report and in response to comments from Members stated that the facility would have accommodation for up to three children, but even with two children resident would mean that the Council would break even compared to the current cost of externally commissioned placements.

Members welcomed the proposal and congratulated Simone on her recent appointment to the post of Director of Children, Families and Education.

On a motion by Councillor Clements, seconded by Councillor Tom Usher, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the acceptance of capital grant monies of up to £700,000 from NHS England to enable the purchase by the Council of a property to be**

used for the purpose of providing a facility for children and young people with learning difficulties, autism and presenting mental health difficulties along with the delivery of suitable services to such occupants, be agreed;

- (2) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to finalise the associated grant agreement;**
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Children, Families and Education and NHS England to purchase a property at market value suitable for the purposes outlined within the report; and**
- (4) delegated authority be given to the Director of Children, Families and Education to procure a registered care provider for the first nine months of the facility's operation.**

90 FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect to the Town / High Street Fund: Future High Streets Fund. The report recommended authorisation being given to the Director of Regeneration and Place to consider and approve final signoff of the Future High Street Fund grant funding agreements for Birkenhead and New Ferry, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance. Also, to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to commence delivery of the Birkenhead and New Ferry Future High Street Fund programmes in line with the grant funding agreement and change control process.

Members expressed their support for the proposals and the enthusiasm with which all the staff concerned were dealing with these regeneration initiatives.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the content of the report and the announcement from Government regarding the Future High Street Fund award in relation to Birkenhead and the in-principle award in relation to New Ferry, be noted;**

- (2) a re-profiled application was submitted to Government on 3 February 2021 in respect of the New Ferry Future High Street Fund in-principle award, be noted;**
- (3) the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to consider and approve final signoff of the Future High Street Fund grant funding agreements for Birkenhead and New Ferry, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance;**
- (4) the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to commence delivery of the Birkenhead and New Ferry Future High Street Fund programmes in line with the grant funding agreement and change control process;**
- (5) the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to progress with scoping out a design, costed model and fit out of the current preferred option for the temporary market, namely Unit 2 St Werburgh's Square and St Werburgh's Square itself, that will be used as a temporary holding position while the current Birkenhead Market site be made available for redevelopment; and**
- (6) it be noted that a further report will be brought forward to members for approval of the finalised proposal for the temporary market.**

91 **MARITIME KNOWLEDGE HUB**

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect to the Maritime Knowledge Hub. The report recommended authorisation being given to the Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Resources, to finalise the Heads of Terms substantially in accordance with the draft Heads of Terms attached as an appendix to the report.

The report also recommended the finalising of agreements for the Council to enter into a conditional Forward Funding Agreement, Agreement for Lease and Lease, based on the finalised heads of terms, with Peel Land and Property (Intermediate) Ltd., and to accept the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement, subject to successful award, from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government in respect of the pre-test and trial Maritime Accelerator Project and to commence necessary procurement exercises to enable the delivery of the Accelerator.

On a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Resources, be authorised to finalise the Heads of Terms substantially in accordance with the draft Heads of Terms attached as an appendix to the report.**
- (2) that the Full Business Case for Maritime Knowledge Hub, be approved;**
- (3) the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place and the Director of Resources, be authorised to finalise agreements for the Council to enter into a conditional Forward Funding Agreement, Agreement for Lease and Lease, based on the finalised heads of terms, with Peel Land and Property (Intermediate) Ltd.;**
- (4) the Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Resources, be authorised to accept the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement, subject to successful award, from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government in respect of the pre-test and trial Maritime Accelerator Project and to commence necessary procurement exercises to enable the delivery of the Accelerator.**

92 **WIRRAL WATERS ENTERPRISE ZONE INVESTMENT FUND - MARITIME KNOWLEDGE HUB**

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect to Wirral Waters - Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone Investment Fund - Maritime Knowledge Hub. The report recommended the acceptance of funding from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to the Council to support the development of new high quality mixed use floorspace at the Maritime Knowledge Hub.

On a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was -

Resolved – That funding from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to the Council to support the development of new high quality mixed use floorspace at the Maritime Knowledge Hub, be approved.

93 **WIRRAL WATERS ENTERPRISE ZONE INVESTMENT FUND - EGERTON VILLAGE**

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect to Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone Investment Fund - Egerton Village. The report recommended the approval of a grant from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to Peel Land and Property Investments (Intermediate) Limited to support the development of new high quality mixed use floorspace at Egerton Village. The report also sought authorisation for the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place to draw up and sign a conditional legal agreement between the Council and Peel Land and Property (Intermediate) Limited to reflect the grant arrangements.

On a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was –

Resolved – That,

- (1) a grant from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to Peel Land and Property Investments (Intermediate) Limited to support the development of new high quality mixed use floorspace at Egerton Village, be approved; and**
- (2) the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to draw up and sign a conditional legal agreement between the Council and Peel Land and Property (Intermediate) Limited to reflect the grant arrangements.**

94 **BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES: COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS PAPER**

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect to the Business Support Services: Commissioning Intentions Paper. The report recommended the endorsement of an extension of the Business Support Services contract to 30 September 2021, and approval of the final Business Support Services specification for delivery of a new service from October 2021 to October 2024, with an option to extend by one year to October 2025 based on satisfactory performance.

On a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) an extension of the Business Support Services contract to 30 September 2021, be endorsed;**
- (2) the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Economy and Regeneration and Development Committee, be authorised to:**
 - (a) Approve the final Business Support Services specification for delivery of a new service from October 2021 to October 2024, with an option to extend by one year to October 2025 based on satisfactory performance.**
 - (b) Commence procurement and select the most economically advantageous supplier(s) to deliver the commissioned services.**
 - (c) Conclude the final contract award.**

95 **WIRRAL WAYS TO WORK**

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect to Wirral Ways to Work. The report recommended authorisation be given to the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director for Regeneration and Place to enter a contract extension and sign the supplier contract with Involve Northwest to continue delivery of the Wirral Ways to Work Worklessness Support Service. Also, to authorise an option for the Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter a 3-month contract extension from July to September 2021.

In response to a Member's comment Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, assured the Committee of the processes in place to keep track of all contracts which the Council had and that the Procurement Team engaged with all contractors 18 months before contracts were due to expire.

On a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to enter a contract extension and sign the supplier contract with Involve Northwest to continue delivery of the Wirral Ways to Work Worklessness Support Service; and**

- (2) an option be authorised for the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, to enter a 3-month contract extension from July to September 2021 to cover off the risk of awaiting a grant funding agreement from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and then proceed to a full extension once confirmation of EU funds is received, should this option need to be utilised.**

96 **NEW FERRY – IMPLEMENTING THE REGENERATION PLAN**

Councillor Anita Leech, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, introduced a report on that Committee's recommendations, from its meeting on 4 March, in respect of the implementation of the New Ferry regeneration plan.

The report recommended the acceptance of the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order(s) ("the 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 area identified in the plan and table, in an appendix to the report, to enable the regeneration of New Ferry to be undertaken and the process for the Order to be subject to procedures laid down by the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. Also, that the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee be authorised to make all necessary further decisions that were not otherwise delegated to officers, in relation to the CPO and consequential on the CPO, 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.

In response to Members comments, Alan Evans, Director of Regeneration and Place, acknowledged that to deliver on all the regeneration projects the Council would need the right skills in the right places and that he was looking to further recruit using a mixture of external funds and Council funds which were already identified.

On a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was -

Resolved – That the following be approved:

- (1) the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order(s) ("the 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 area identified in the plan and table in an appendix attached to this**

report to enable the regeneration of New Ferry to be undertaken and the process for the Order shall be subject to following the procedures laid down by the Acquisition of Land Act 1981;

- (2) the draft skeleton Statement of Reasons attached as an appendix to the report, which (in addition to the information in the report) sets out the justification for making the Order;
- (3) the Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance be granted delegated authority to:
 - (a) finalise the Statement of Reasons;
 - (b) draft the Order Map and Schedule before the making of the Order (if required);
 - (c) negotiate, agree terms and enter into agreements with interested parties including agreements for the withdrawal of blight notices and / or the withdrawal of objections to the Order and / or undertakings not to enforce the Order on specified terms, including (but not limited to) where appropriate seeking the exclusion of land or rights from the Order, making provision for the payment of compensation and / or relocation;
- (4) the Director of Law and Governance be granted delegated authority to:
 - (a) take all steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Order including the publication and service of all notices and the promotion of the Council's case at any public inquiry;
 - (b) in the event the Order is confirmed by the Secretary of State, to advertise and give notice of confirmation and thereafter to take all steps to implement the Order;
 - (c) take all steps in relation to any legal proceedings relating to the Order including defending or settling claims referred to the Upper Tribunal and / or applications to the courts and any appeals;
- (5) that where required to assist in the delivery of the New Ferry Preferred development option and may be appropriated for planning purposes pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972 to enable Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to be utilised to override any third-party rights of land or part thereof; and
- (6) that the Economy, Regeneration and Development 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.

Following discussion on this item, the Chair referred to this being the last Policy and Resources Committee which Councillor Anita Leech, would be attending, as she was standing down at the next election and thanked her for all her hard work, especially since last September, as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee. All the Group Leaders associated themselves with the Chair's words of thanks to Councillor Leech for all her work with the regeneration initiatives and on the positive progress with the Local Plan.

97 MINUTES OF THE SENIOR OFFICER AND APPOINTMENTS STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved – That the minutes of the Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee meetings held on of 13 January and 24 February, 2021, be noted.

98 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was -

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

99 NORTH WEST MUTUAL BANK APPENDIX

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the North West Mutual Bank report, be noted.

100 MARITIME KNOWLEDGE HUB EXEMPT APPENDICES

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the Maritime Knowledge Hub report, be noted.

101 **WIRRAL WATERS ENTERPRISE ZONE INVESTMENT FUND - MARITIME KNOWLEDGE HUB EXEMPT APPENDIX**

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone Investment Fund - Maritime Knowledge Hub report, be noted.

102 **WIRRAL WATERS ENTERPRISE ZONE INVESTMENT FUND - EGERTON VILLAGE EXEMPT APPENDICES**

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone Investment Fund – Egerton Village report, be noted.

103 **BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES: COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS PAPER EXEMPT APPENDICES**

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the Business Support Services: Commissioning Intentions Paper report, be noted.

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24 March 2021

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Williamson (Chair)	
	Councillors	T Anderson	A Hodson
		C Carubia	J McManus
		P Cleary	Y Nolan
		W Clements	L Rennie
		P Gilchrist	C Spriggs
		JE Green	P Stuart
		EA Grey	T Usher
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	J Robinson (In place of A Leech)	
		S Hayes (In place of M McLaughlin)	

104 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

105 APOLOGIES

The Chair announced that apologies had been received from Councillors Anita Leech and Moira McLaughlin and that Councillors Jean Robinson and Steve Hayes were deputising for them respectively.

106 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.

Councillor Julie McManus declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 5, 'Edsential CIC – Letter of Comfort' by virtue of her employment.

It was also noted that Councillors Jeff Green and Janette Williamson, in their roles as members of the Shareholder Board, and Councillor Wendy Clements, in her role as Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, had received briefings on Edsential.

107 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that no questions from either members of the public or Members had been submitted. Nor were there any statements or petitions to receive.

108 **EDSENTIAL CIC - LETTER OF COMFORT**

Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance, introduced a report on Edsential Community Interest Company, a company wholly owned equally by the Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council, which had experienced significant trading and financial difficulties as a consequence of the COVID 19 Pandemic. It had been in negotiation with officers of both the Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council with a view to obtaining additional financial support. In order for the auditors to sign off the company as a “going concern”, however, it needed to demonstrate that there was a reasonable expectation that the company had adequate resources to continue to be operational.

To this end, the shareholders, Wirral Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council, had been asked to provide a letter of comfort that they would provide a means to adequate funding to give assurance that the company would remain viable and have a realistic mechanism for recovering the recent and projected losses.

The core, underlying business (prior to Covid-19) had proven to be profitable and marginally cash generative. Subject to adequate revised business plans, consideration of the company’s resources and long term consequences of any short term support provided and the assessment of need at the close of lockdown and re-opening of Edsential’s activities, it was considered in the Council’s interest as a shareholder, together with Cheshire West and Chester Council, to provide such funding and the letter of comfort in advance of that detailed application.

Philip McCourt also referred to the Council’s current appointee to the board of directors of Edsential, Simone White, whose role within the Council had changed upon her promotion to Director of Children’s Services. It was considered, therefore, that her role was best taken up by another officer related to the delivery of education and youth provision and create a separation to respect the conflict of interest between company and Council.

In response to comments from Members, Philip McCourt confirmed that the purpose of the letter was about offering confidence that the company would be a going concern and was for funding and finance distinct from the £2m cashflow agreement over a five year period agreed by the Committee on 21 December, 2020 (minute 38 refers).

Members expressed support for the proposal as Edsential provided a valuable service to schools across the Borough.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, it was -

Resolved – That,

(1) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Resources, to:

(a) provide a letter of comfort to Edsential that financial support will be provided to the company over the forthcoming period, in the form of Covid related funding support and/or a commercial loan, to be offered in conjunction with Cheshire West & Chester Council and subject to approval by this Committee; and

(b) consider such a request for assistance from Edsential to this Council, which shall only be granted subject to the approval of this Committee and which consideration should include assessment of the request (due diligence), revised business plan(s) and any conditions considered appropriate to be applied at the point of offer;

(2) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Children’s Services, to appoint a replacement officer as a director of Edsential.

109 ITEM OF URGENT BUSINESS - PROPOSED GRANT AGREEMENT WITH LCR COMBINED AUTHORITY FOR THE COSTS OF THE ACQUISITION OF 92 GRANGE ROAD, BIRKENHEAD

The Chair stated that she had agreed to this item of urgent business, in view of the need for a decision before 31 March, 2021.

Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance, reported that the Council had embarked on an ambitious strategy to regenerate Birkenhead and on 21 December 2020 this Committee had agreed to the acquisition of the former House of Fraser building (92 Grange Road, Birkenhead) (minute 43 refers). Following the purchase of the property, the Council had been offered grant funding by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to enable it to recoup the purchase costs. The terms of the proposed grant provided for certain clawback provisions which were detailed in the report, and which in response to a Member’s comment he clarified for the Committee.

Alan Evans, Director of Regeneration and Place, referred to today’s launch of the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and that this asset was a key gateway area, and would bring forward plans for the complete regeneration of the area. Responding to Members’ comments he stated that the Council was looking to work with Homes England in respect of the wider ‘left bank’ proposal. He was confident the deadlines were achievable with regard to full planning consent for residential housing on this site being submitted by 30 September, 2022. A number of options for a development partner would be

discussed and he would be bringing a report back to the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee as soon as possible.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Julie McManus, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the Director of Law and Governance, be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Resources, to enter into a grant agreement with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to secure up to £2,109,000 of funding to re-imburse the Council’s costs for the acquisition of 92 Grange Road Birkenhead; and**
- (2) agree that given that the funding offer is conditional on formal acceptance by 31 March 2021, this decision is urgent and not subject to call in.**

110 **PROPOSAL TO ACQUIRE UNITS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING USE**

Councillor Julie McManus, as Chair of the Housing Committee, introduced a report on that Committee’s recommendations in respect of increasing the number of homes in Wirral’s social housing sector, through the use of existing resources available from:

- commuted sums for affordable housing secured through the planning system;
- adaptations Budget passported through the Better Care Fund; and
- potentially also securing funding from Homes England from the Government’s Affordable Housing Programme.

Members welcomed the report and in response to a Member’s comment Councillor Julie McManus stated that there was no need to open a Housing Revenue Account, as with the current 28 properties the Council had, an additional six would not take the Council above the 199 limit, which the Council was allowed.

Alan Evans, Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed the threshold in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and that the associated costs would not be triggered. The Housing Committee work programme did include the issue of the Housing Revenue Account and that Committee would also be looking at future management options of the Council’s other homes, currently managed by Magenta until September, 2021, along with the use of future S106 monies, income which was ringfenced for affordable housing in the Borough.

Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance, in response to a Member’s question, commented upon the delicate balance to be struck by the Chair in

controlling the debate and questions asked during the meeting on reports before the Committee.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, it was -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to negotiate the acquisition of six new social rented housing properties from Lovell Partnerships Ltd and to finalise all necessary associated legal documentation; and**
- (2) the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to enter into negotiations with Lovell Partnerships Ltd to negotiate an enhanced energy efficiency specification which may include the installation of solar photovoltaics for such properties.**

111 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was -

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves 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.

112 PROPOSAL TO ACQUIRE UNITS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING USE EXEMPT APPENDIX

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the Proposal to Acquire Units for Affordable Housing Use report, be noted.

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

REPORT TITLE:	COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING UPDATE
REPORT OF:	ALAN EVANS, DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

A prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations is a key priority for the Council. Community Wealth Building is a key part of how we will achieve this and makes a major contribution to the economic, social and health outcomes of the borough.

This report provides an update on latest developments to drive Community Wealth across Wirral, together with some an overview of actions to accelerate this approach as part of Wirral's Strategic Recovery.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the progress made in driving Community Wealth Building in Wirral to date and endorse the approach going forward.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Community Wealth Building (CWB) must be at the core of Wirral's strategic planning and recovery, and this approach sets out the priorities, ambition, and key deliverables for the organisation to do this.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Community Wealth Building is an intrinsic part of Wirral's commitment to build a more prosperous and fairer borough, and therefore no other options were considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As part of our commitment to driving inclusive economic growth, in recent years Wirral Council (alongside key national players such as Preston and Salford) has been leading a Local Community Wealth Building project with the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES), which will help us and our partners to create a more inclusive economy. Pre-Covid, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources Councillor Williamson launched Wirral's Community Wealth Building Strategy in February 2020. (Attached at Appendix 1). The Strategy set out a strong commitment to achieve ambitious growth that also brings benefits for local people, communities, and businesses; and helps to tackle wider social and economic disparities.
- 3.2 During 2020 the social, economic, and political landscape in the borough has significantly changed. Covid has sharply exposed existing inequalities, and it is therefore essential that our CWB Strategy is at the heart of our emerging Strategic Recovery Plans. CLES has been working with the Council to help refocus our original CWB Strategy so that we can respond to the impact of Covid and inform our Economic Recovery Plan (see para 3.4). Community Wealth is being embedded into our refreshed Wirral Plan, to help drive inclusive economic growth as well supporting a wide range of our strategic goals to improve outcomes in relation to health and social care; families; environment; housing. Projects such as The Wirral Growth Company and the Investment Strategy are being directed and informed by the principles of Community Wealth Building.

3.3 Activity to date

3.3.1 Social Value

(a) Over the last 3 years, Wirral Council has sought to identify and maximise the wider financial and non-financial impacts of programmes, organisations and interventions, including the wellbeing of individuals and communities, social capital and the environment through its hugely successful embedding of Social Value measurement and management in to commissioning opportunities.

(b) To date, this programme has realised £6.2m and commitment of £12.1m in additional Social Value contributions from our supply chain. In addition, some of the non-financial benefits realised have had a tremendous impact on the lives of our communities, in particular the multi award winning programme of securing

employment and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. This approach has provided many meaningful opportunities with real training and career opportunities. Benefits include:

- Local Employment – creation of local employment and training opportunities
- Maximising the Wirral Pound – buying locally where possible to reduce unemployment and raise local skills (within the funding available and whilst minimising risk to Wirral)
- Community development - development of resilient local community and community support organisations, especially in those areas and communities with the greatest need
- Good Employer - support for staff development and welfare within providers' own organisations and within their supply chain
- Green and Sustainable: protecting the environment, minimising waste and energy consumption and using other resources efficiently, within providers' own organisations and within their supply chain

(c) Wirral has recently reviewed and updated its Social Value approach. The new approach is based on the same methodology of using the open-source National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) to assign a quantitative and qualitative score to Social Value. Our performance and evidence-based approach to Social Value is considered in every procurement exercise valued at £100,000 and above; subject to the Public Contract Regulations 2015, and to lower values if applicable. Wirral Council's full list of TOMs contains 37 measures across the 4 themes of:

- Jobs: Promote Local Skills and Employment
- Growth: Supporting Growth of Responsible Regional Business
- Social: Healthier, Safer and more Resilient Communities and
- Environment: Decarbonising and Safeguarding our World.

This new approach to collecting, evaluating and monitoring Social Value information will allow us to maximise even more the Social Value Wirral receives.

3.3.2 Community Businesses and Co-operatives

(a) Expansion of support to community businesses and cooperative sector - as part of our CWB approach there is a commitment to support and increase a more plural economy – including co-operatives and community businesses. We have been working closely with organisations including Power to Change and others to support this sector.

(b) Wirral was acknowledged as TrailBlazer Council for Keep it Local Capacity: The Public Services Lab, to support its local voluntary and community sector through reforms to commissioning and procurement to help them harness the local potential that exists in our neighbourhoods and communities.

(c) The Chamber of Commerce have established a Community Business Forum that puts the VCF sector on an equal footing with the rest of the industry sectors.

(d) Building on Wirral's leading approach in this field, support for socially trading community businesses was boosted in August 2020, when the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority launched the £6.5m Kindred initiative, which includes £5.5m from the LCRCA and a further £1 million from independent trust and strategic

partner, Power to Change. This approach acknowledges the value and importance of the LCR socially trading sector – sometimes known as community businesses – those companies that set out to deliver social benefits by trading commercially. They do not include more traditional charities who rely solely on donations or grant income, or those organisations who export profits from a locality. The sector employs 50,000 people, one in ten of the city region’s workforce, with 1300 socially trading organisations generating £2.9 billion per year for the city region economy. It is a significant part of Building Back Better, the economic recovery plan for the Liverpool City Region.

(e) Wirral Council is committed to doing more to support plural ownership and co-operatives and to focus on collaboration with local residents. We are exploring opportunities for more community owned businesses, community interest companies, worker owned cooperatives, and to advance the role of SMEs in our economy,

3.3.3 Community Bank

(a) A key principle within CWB aims to make financial power work for local places to increase investment in local economies by harnessing the wealth that exists locally. This moves towards a more generative economic model of finance, where investors want communities to prosper, not to extract their wealth, but because they have a real stake in the local community. Wirral has been looking to achieve this through the formation of the Northwest Community Bank. The Council, alongside Liverpool and Preston Councils have agreed to invest in the North West Mutual Ltd, a Community Bank that will support the needs of residents and businesses across the North West that aims to keep the wealth of the North West in the North West.

(b) The Bank is at the initial stages of development and will take around 18 – 24 months to open, on the basis that it is granted a banking licence by the Bank of England. The Council will not own the bank or have any role in its management, it will be a shareholder and member as the bank will operate on a cooperative basis and will be owned by all of its members – account holders and investors. Recruitment is currently underway for an Interim Board who will be responsible for recruiting the key roles that will take the development of the bank forward.

3.3.4 Strategic rollout of Community Wealth Building

We continue to embed CWB across our wider strategic plans and partnership. Over the last year, actions included:

(a) Linking Social Value to procurement across our partners. Wirral Health Care Commissioning now use Social Value in their hospital and care provider contracts.

(b) During Covid we committed to Real Living Wage to our Care Sector.

(c) Rolling this out with Partners and Anchor Organisations: these are the organisations which have an important presence in a place, typically large scale employers, purchasers of goods and services in the locality; overseeing large areas of land and having relatively fixed assets; organisations that do not have profit as their main motivation. Examples include local authorities, NHS trusts, universities, trade unions, large local businesses, housing associations and the combined activities of the community and voluntary sector.

Pre-Covid, work was underway with Wirral Partners to develop this approach. This included baseline assessments to scope out local spend, and workshops to agree some joint actions for increasing local spend and procurement. Although this work was paused during our response to Covid, there is a commitment to re-start it now as part of our emerging Recovery Planning.

(d) Community Wealth Building is being embedded into the heart of our refreshed Wirral Plan and Strategic Recovery Planning. It will help drive inclusive economic growth as well supporting a wide range of our strategic goals to improve outcomes in relation to health and social care; families; environment; housing and so on.

(e) Major Regeneration Projects such as The Wirral Growth Company and the Investment Strategy are being directed and informed by the principles of Community Wealth Building. The Wirral Growth company will have social value policies tailored to the individual development eg use of local labour and local spend. The Birkenhead Town centre plans were recently considered at Planning Committee. Proposals to include a S106 agreement and the Heads of Terms are currently being finalised. These include enhancements to open space, education, family housing, affordable housing, local employment as part of the application for a major redevelopment for the town centre.

(f) In acknowledgement of Wirral's flagship role in leading CWB locally, Wirral has also been tasked with leading community led growth across the Liverpool City Region. Wirral has played a key role in ensuring that CWB is at the core of LCR Recovery and Regeneration Plans. Extensive activity has been underway to highlight the value of social economy and community businesses across the City Region. Wirral has been working with key partners including Power to Change, to support and develop the Community Business sector support socially trading organisations so that they can employ local people, build community wealth and solve problems in their local community. Liverpool City partner are also working to create a Fair Employment Charter to improve working conditions for thousands of working people across the Liverpool City Region and to support employers in delivering improved working conditions as they grow and create jobs.

(g) LJMU Wirral Regeneration Research
Work is currently underway in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University to research and produce a new approach to address the impact of environment on health, wellbeing and social outcomes and sustainable development. This research aims to identify how regeneration (such as Wirral Waters) and poverty-related activities in Wirral contribute to health, wellbeing and wider social value outcomes for people and communities.

3.4 Forthcoming developments

3.4.1 Building on the Council's original Community Wealth Building Strategy, and to reflect the changing Covid context, CLES have recently been providing advice and support to identify 5 specific areas of activity for this year. These activities were chosen as the key potential workstreams with the most potential for translating Community Wealth Building principles into immediate practical action. The activity areas identified for CLES support are:

- Activity 1: Embed Community Wealth Building into Dock Branch Park Plans

- Activity 2: Exploration of a Community Wealth Building Hub
- Activity 3: Anchor Commissioning & Procurement Group
- Activity 4: Economic Baselineing
- Activity 5: Housing

(a) Activity 1: Embed CWB into Wirral Dock Branch Park Corridor Plans

This strand sets out a series of options for how Community Wealth Building principles can be translated into practice in one of our key placemaking projects: Dock Branch Park. The research highlights three key areas where the project team can focus their resources in designing and building a delivery plan for the project:

- Undertaking meaningful community engagement:
- Models of land management and land value uplift: A principle which ensures that the success of public investments is captured and reinvested back into the local communities.
- Local jobs and apprenticeships - the emerging delivery plan looks to partners around existing assets such as our world class Centre for Skills in Construction, and the Wirral Ways to Work Programme which supports eligible workless young people and adults to move into education, employment and training.

The project has an extremely strong alignment with national programmes and strategies including the National Levelling Up and Decarbonisation Agendas and the Prime Minister's 10-point Green Recovery Strategy; the clear understanding is that the community needs to be at the heart of this project to ensure its success.

(b) Activity 2: Exploration of CWB Hub Model

This initiative is developing outline proposals for a Community Wealth Building (CWB) Hub, which will set out how Community Wealth Building actions can be embedded into regeneration plans and the local business support offer, to ensure that community businesses, co-operatives and the voluntary sector are supported to grow and increase connection with local communities.

(c) Activity 3: Wirral Anchor Commissioning & Procurement Group

Building on our earlier engagement with partner institutions across Wirral, the Council is re-invigorating the development of the Wirral Anchor Commissioning & Procurement Group to refocus the potential of partners' Commissioning in contributing to a sustainable economic recovery through Community Wealth Building principles. This will focus of the progressive procurement of goods and services to boost local employment and retain wealth locally.

(d) Activity 4: Community Wealth Building Dashboard

Extensive activity is currently underway to develop a dashboard of Community Wealth Building Indicators. Wirral Intelligence Service working with procurement will produce a dashboard of indicators including systems to baseline and measure key metrics in relation to Wirral Council spend. This will enable Wirral to demonstrate clear and tangible progress in turning the CWB Strategy into reality.

(e) Activity 5: Housing

This activity will focus on community wealth in the context of delivering affordable housing. Work with Registered Providers is planned to understand their integral role in our local communities and their approach to Community Wealth Building to identify

best practice and understand what barriers they may have to progress further. Alongside this work will be the recognition of what local best practice community wealth is already being delivered as part of development programmes, to produce a series of recommendations to go forward.

3.5 Scoping and review will take place into the potential use of Community Investment Bonds as part of Wirral's wider Community Wealth Building approach.

3.6 Conclusion

Since the CWB Strategy was agreed in February 2020, considerable progress has been made and Wirral is clearly becoming a national leader in Community Wealth Building. As we move into Strategic Recovery, Community Wealth Building will be more important than ever; intrinsic to everything the Council does and will be embedded into all our activity going forward.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications at this time.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 No adverse implications for Staffing, ICT and Assets

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no relevant risks.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Wirral's approach to Community Wealth Building is based on what people have told us is important, and is being delivered through strong engagement with staff, residents, businesses and partners as part of a collaborative approach.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The fundamental aim of Wirral's Community Wealth Building Strategy is to tackle inequalities and improve equity for all our residents. It will address the existing socio-economic and health inequalities in the Borough, help us to do things differently and make a fairer, more inclusive Wirral. Equality Impact Assessments will take place as specific projects are implemented.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Community Wealth Building reflects the Council's strong commitment to improve the environment, with clear actions to address environment and climate emergency such as increasing procurement from local businesses, thus shortening supply chains and lowering emissions.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Rosemary Boylan**
Policy & Strategy Manager
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Wirral Community Wealth Building Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Community Wealth Building Strategy

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	24 th February 2020

Community Wealth Building Strategy 2020-2025

FOREWARD:

I am delighted to launch our Community Wealth Building Strategy. This is a key document for us that sets out our ambitions to support communities to become more independent, financially self-sufficient and take ownership of public assets to run them in ways that are beneficial to them.

The strategy is the result of several months of research and engagement with communities and partners and is supported by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) who we commissioned as the UK leading body to work with us on developing the Strategy and subsequent action plan.

Wirral is clearly becoming a leader in Community Wealth Building evidenced by the number of number of invitations to speak at events and requests for support and guidance about how Wirral as approached the Strategy.

Community Wealth Building is intrinsic to everything the Council does and will be embedded into all our activity going forward. Following an initial discussion with our partners, I am pleased to see that we are now working closely with our partners and anchors to support them to embed the principles into their own organisations. This will enable a borough wide approach, supported by the Council rather than a Council run initiative. In time, we intend to also work with our private sector anchors to ensure that the strategy can be implemented across all sectors of the borough. This will become more prevalent once the North West Mutual Community Bank is live.



This Strategy is vital to demonstrate our mission to support communities in Wirral to support themselves by providing opportunities for: growing the number of small businesses, residents to be able to access employment and communities to come together to promote positive mental wellbeing. Therefore I am proud to launch this Strategy to support this mission.

Councillor Janette Williamson

Introduction

A prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations is a key priority of the Wirral Council Plan 2020. It is one of the ways in which to secure the best future for our residents. Community wealth building is a key part of how we will achieve this and makes a major contribution to the economic, social and health outcomes of the borough.

We want an economy that benefits all of our residents and one which keeps money within Wirral. This Strategy outlines our vision for doing this and why it is an important part of realising our shared ambitions for the borough.

What is Community Wealth Building?

Community Wealth Building is a people centred approach to local economic development. Community Wealth Building seeks to restructure the composition of the economy itself so that wealth is widely held, shared and democratised. It reorganises local economies to be fairer and stops wealth flowing out of our communities, towns and cities, and instead places control of this wealth into the hands of local people, communities, businesses and organisations.

A number of places across the UK, including are now developing strategies to implement community wealth building in their local economies.

¹ CLES are a think and do tank that have been at the forefront of pioneering work relating to Local Government, local economic development and

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)¹ has five principles that underpin community wealth building:

1. Plural Ownership of the Economy;
2. Progressive Procurement of Goods and Services;
3. Socially Just Use of Land and Property;
4. Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets; and
5. Making Financial Power work for Local Places.

Harnessing the Power of Anchor Institutions

A central element to community wealth building is harnessing the power of anchor institutions in a local economy.

Anchor Institutions are organisations which have an important presence in a place. They are typically:

- Large scale employers, purchasers of goods and services in the locality;
- Overseeing large areas of land and having relatively fixed assets;
- Tied to a place by their mission, histories, physical assets and local relationships.
- Organisations that do not have profit as their main motivation.

Examples include local authorities, NHS trusts, universities, trade unions, large local businesses, housing associations and the combined activities of the community and voluntary sector. With large budgets

community wealth building. CLES have been working with Wirral Council to help develop this strategy.

and often thousands of employees, anchor institutions play a defining role in community wealth building.

Arguably, commercial businesses can be considered anchor institutions, if they are rooted to place. Examples of businesses which play a role as community anchors might include major football clubs, or legacy industrial employers.

A Democratic, Inclusive, Generative Economy

Community wealth building seeks to change the economy by making it more democratic. Encouraging the setup of community businesses and cooperatives means that more people in our local communities can have a say in what happens to the wealth generated by them. This involves both democracy in the workplace (e.g. through encouraging cooperatives, and strong trade unions), but also in ensuring that residents have more power over how Wirral's wealth is shared and spent.

Why is Community Wealth Building important for Wirral?

The UK is the fifth richest country in the world, yet 14.3 million people live in poverty, 8 million of whom are from working families. Poverty is a huge issue in the UK, and Wirral is no exception. The east of our borough has some of the most deprived wards in the country; there are high concentrations of child poverty (more than 35% in

some wards) and household income is well below the national average.

High levels of income inequality increase instability and debt, and there are well established links between economic inequality and crime. Overall health is worse in more economically unequal countries, notably mental health and obesity. Recent evidence also suggests that rising income inequality may be associated with lower economic growth (OECD, 2015).

Wirral has significant health inequalities compared to the rest of England, with higher levels of alcohol specific hospital admissions, cancer deaths, respiratory deaths and residents with long term disabilities (Wirral Council, 2019). There are also health inequalities within the borough: residents in the more affluent areas of Wirral can expect to live up to ten years more than those in our most deprived areas.

The Local Plan, Strategic Regeneration Framework, The Growth Plan and the Wirral Council Plan 2025 emphasise the importance of economic growth. To ensure that our aspiration for growth is realised, we need to address the inequalities in Wirral. By focussing on generating wealth and keeping it in our local communities, The Community Wealth Building Strategy will work to address inequality and ensure that all residents in the borough feel the benefits of economic growth.

Community Wealth Building in Strategic Context

This strategy plays a vital role in the Medium-Term Financial Plan ²and the

² The Medium Term Financial Plan is a five year plan that describes how the council will generate

and allocate resources to meet its corporate priorities.

Wirral Plan 2025. It will help to reengineer our local economy and harness the power of our people and anchor institutions, to provide resilience where there is risk and local economic security where there is precarity. This

will drive everything Wirral Council does, specifically our approach to regeneration and investment, commissioning, procurement and management of our assets to build the wealth of our local communities.

The Strategy has three objectives:

Strategic Objective 1:

Democratic Economy

An economy where decision making power is shifted from corporate managers and shareholders to a larger group of public stakeholders including, workers, customers and the community.

Strategic Objective 2:

Generative Economy

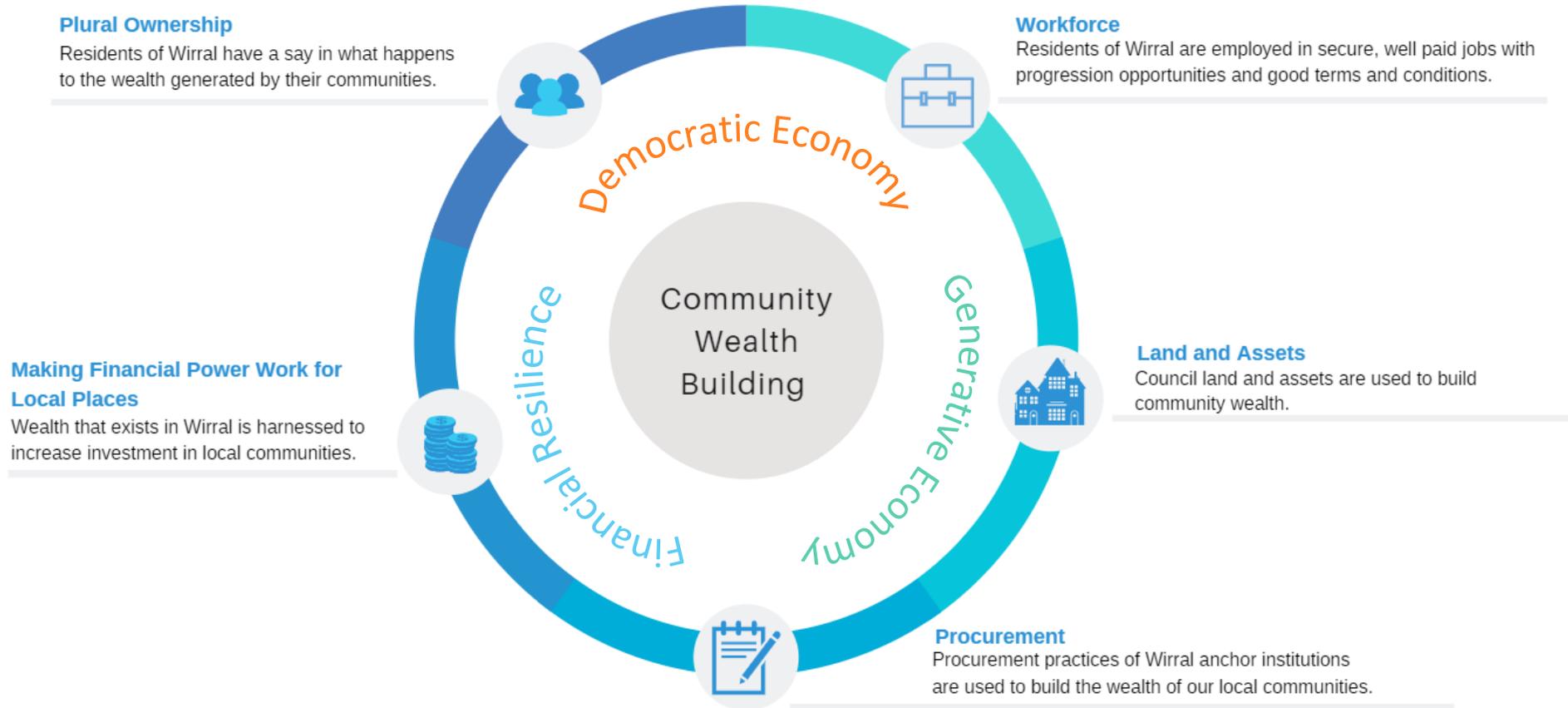
An economy with a built-in tendency to be socially fair and ecologically stable. A generative economy is built on a foundation of stakeholder ownership designed to generate and preserve real wealth that is shared by communities.

Strategic Objective 3:

Financial Resilience

A resilient economy is one where families and communities that hold assets (such as social networks, a home, some savings, an ownership stake in a business, a secure job) are more able to withstand knocks such as job losses or illness. It also means local public services and the community sector are less vulnerable to the shocks of austerity, budget cuts and economic recession.

The three strategic objectives will be delivered across the five pillars of the community wealth building as visualised in the diagram below.

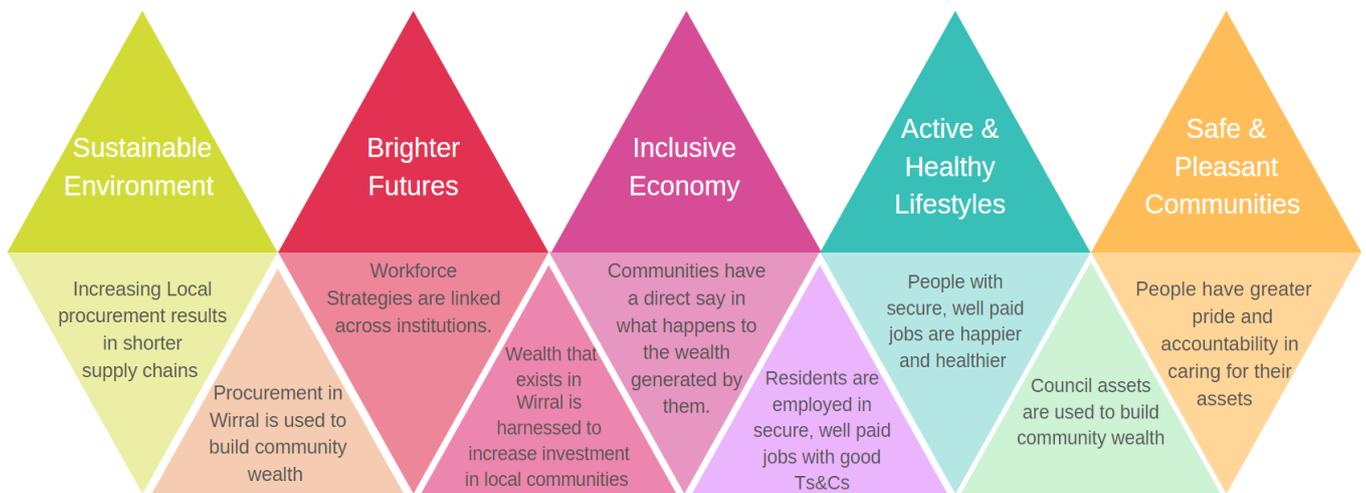


How does Community Wealth Building link into our overall ambition for Wirral?

Community Wealth building is a new approach economic development that proposes a more common-sense approach to how we create a good local economy. It is common sense because it suggests that, rather than relying on inward investment as the sole source of wealth, Wirral harnesses its existing wealth in a more democratic and resilient manner.

Community Wealth building fits strategically with our new Wirral Plan 2025. It will directly support the Wirral Plan 2025 priority inclusive economy as well supporting a wide range of our strategic goals to improve outcomes in relation to health and social care, families, environment and housing. All major regeneration projects such as The Wirral Growth Company, as well as our commissioning intentions and procurement approach should be directed and informed by the principles of Community Wealth Building to ensure that there is a coordinated approach across the Council.

Community wealth building will help to deliver on the Wirral 2025 plan by directly supporting the 2025 priorities:



Outcome 1: Residents of Wirral have ownership of the economy and have a say in what happens to the wealth generated by their communities.

This outcome is linked to the principle of plural ownership of the economy. Plural ownership is defined as a diverse blend of ownership models including small enterprises, community organisations, cooperatives, insourcing and forms of municipal ownership. These models allow the wealth created by users, workers and local communities to be held by them rather than flowing out as profits to shareholders.

Plural Ownership can take a variety of forms:

1. Businesses with explicitly democratic forms of ownership e.g. community owned businesses, community interest companies, worker owned cooperatives, public-commons partnerships etc (for the purpose of this report we will call these social businesses).
2. Advancing the role of SMEs in a local economy, especially when compared to big businesses.
3. Municipal forms of ownership e.g. local authority insourcing.

What is Wirral already doing?

- As regards insourcing, Wirral has a number of businesses that it wholly or jointly owns:
 - Edsential;
 - Wirral Evolutions; and
 - The Wirral Growth Company.

- Wirral is working with Capacity Lab and Lloyds Bank, a partnership to help community groups strengthen their organisation and access more funding and support to ensure they are not disadvantaged in the tendering and commissioning services.
- We commission Community Action Wirral to provide support to the community, Voluntary and Faith Sector. This includes advice and guidance on set up, funding applications and development as well as connecting the social sector in Wirral.
- Our partners, Wirral Chamber of Commerce have set up a specific department responsible for the start-up and support of community and voluntary sector organisations.

What else will Wirral do?

1. **Encourage the development of the social business sector.**

Businesses with different models of democratic ownership are less developed in the Wirral (compared to e.g. Liverpool). An underdeveloped sector will limit our other outcomes, as well as our overall objectives. We will explore how a social business network could support new and existing democratic businesses and increases awareness of other types of ownership. We will look to other examples of development networks

in places such as Preston, Barcelona, Cleveland and Mondragon to design a network that works for Wirral. This will be supported by CLES and Capacity lab and supported by organisations such as the Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Involve Northwest and Community Action Wirral. We will need to understand what the sector needs to grow, and we will explore ways to do this. An example of how this has been achieved elsewhere involves lending to social businesses using funds from a Public Works Loan Board. There are already a number of successful examples throughout the UK, including Hull City Council lending to the Goodwin Development Trust and Plymouth City Council's investment in Plymouth Community Energy.

2. Explore additional routes for municipal ownership

Wirral Council is also committed to ensuring that municipal ownership is considered across appropriate sectors. In doing so, there will also be a focus on collaboration with local residents, for example through public-commons partnerships (PCPs). A Public Commons Partnership (PCP) is an arrangement between a public institution and a commons association such as a cooperative or community interest company. PCPs will be explored to assess what role they can play in community wealth building in the Wirral.

How will we measure success?

- Net new social businesses created.
- Increase in value of the sector.
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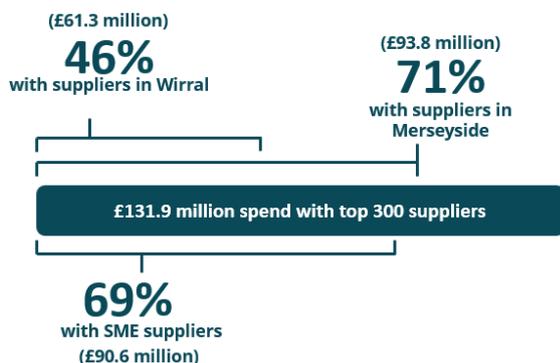
Outcome 2: Procurement practices of Wirral anchor institutions are used to build the wealth of our local communities.

To achieve this outcome, we will need dense local supply chains, comprising SMEs, employee owned businesses, social enterprises, cooperatives and other forms of community businesses.

The purpose of this work is **not** to get 100% of local anchor spend to be within Wirral but is instead to ensure that as much social value is extracted from this spend as possible.

What is Wirral already doing?

- In 2017/18, Wirral Council spent £131.9 million on contracts for goods, works and services. A analysis of this spend found that the council spends 46% (£61.3million) with suppliers in the Wirral and 71% (£93.8million) with suppliers in Merseyside. 69% (£90.6million) was spent with SMEs.



For comparison, Preston, which has embedded a community wealth

building approach, started off in 2012 spending 5% and 39% which has increased to 18.2% in Preston and 79% in Lancashire (2016/17). By having a focus on procuring locally, Preston has able to retain an extra £200million in the Lancashire area. In comparison to Preston, Wirral is relatively good at keeping spending local, however this contrasts with Manchester City Council, which spent 74% with suppliers in Manchester, and 91% in Greater Manchester in 2015/16. Although the purpose of this work is not to have 100% of anchor spend within Wirral (and it is also important to recognise the greater potential that a council such as Greater Manchester has to procure within its boundaries), this analysis is useful to identify gaps and opportunities for social business development.

- Wirral is currently in a partnership with Lloyds bank and capacity lab. This work will help ensure that more social businesses and SME's are prepared and supported to apply for contracts from our anchor institutions.
- Social Value is now an integral part of our procurement process, with weighting 15%.
- The Children and Young People's team have developed partnerships

with companies in the council supply chain to support care leavers into sustainable employment.

What else will Wirral do?

1. Increase the amount of goods and services procured from social businesses in Wirral.

£73million (55% of procurement spend) is spent with just 43 suppliers in the health and social care sector. The healthcare sector is our least plural spend, and as such the following actions should be focussed on, (but not limited to) the healthcare sector. We will work with other anchors to identify other opportunities to use our collective buying power.

2. Continue to extend and develop support for social businesses to enable them to access contract opportunities.

Continue to work with Capacity and CLES to analyse our procurement spend to identify contracts that could be provided by more plural elements of the economy. The social business development network will be used to encourage more entrants to the market. We will encourage our partners to inspect their contracts to identify goods and services that could be provided by other anchors, or the social business sector (e.g. pest control).

3. Continue to increase the amount of goods and services procured from local businesses.

This strategy aims to increase local procurement. We will, with our partners, identify gaps that could be

filled by social businesses and cooperatives, and consider the development of business to fill gaps where there are none already available. Where this is not possible, the social value policy will be used to ensure that businesses that are not based in Wirral are still supporting our local communities.

4. Monitor the effectiveness of the social value policy.

Continue to monitor effectiveness of the social value policy, framework and portal, paying particular attention to how the social value policy is affecting smaller companies and social businesses. We are aware of the risks that large companies with dedicated corporate social responsibility (CSR) teams could 'swallow up' Social Value-heavy contracts and will take steps to ensure that SMEs and social businesses get the support they need to meet the criteria.

5. Link procurement across anchor institutions, so that the European Single Procurement Document (or equivalent post Brexit) also covers Council Procurement.

We will also Build on existing discussions with the Wirral Partnership to embed social value across our partners' Procurement policies.

How will we measure success?

- Measure the increase in spend procured from local social businesses.

- Measure the increase in social businesses applying for, and successfully winning public sector contracts.
- Monitor unsuccessful contract bids to assess if the social value policy is putting social businesses at a disadvantage.
- Measure the social value obtained from contracts.

Outcome 3: Council land and assets are used as a base to build community wealth.

The function and ownership of these assets will be strengthened to ensure any gain is harnessed by citizens. Community use of assets will be developed and extended.

What is Wirral already doing?

- 20 community asset transfers in the last ten years.
- Supporting Make CIC to set up Make Hamilton Square in the treasury building.
- Supporting the New Ferry Community Land Trust. The CLT has been set up and is run by local people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets.
- Asset management strategy that lead to the One Wirral Public Estate Group, which brings together all public sector bodies in a locality to work together on land and property management.

What else will Wirral do?

1. Ensure council assets are used for the benefit of the local community. Council assets play a socially beneficial role in the in the local community. Community Connectors and other networks such as Wirral Community of Practice will be used to inform

communities about the council's new community wealth building approach to asset management. To do this we will promote Community Right to Bid to add to the community asset register. The Council will also work with groups that have had successful and unsuccessful asset transfers to determine how the asset transfer policy needs to change align to the community wealth building strategy. The Council will continue to support the social business sector to ensure that the sector is able to take on assets that are important to local communities. The Social Business network would play a key role in linking up new and existing social businesses with potential assets for use or transfer. Current assets (e.g. Birkenhead Market) could be used to facilitate in this in the form of incubators, coworking spaces etc.

2. Build on existing discussions with the Wirral Partnership to explore use of public sector assets.

3. Encourage the set-up of Community Land Trusts. Promote the creation of community land trusts to allow residents to take the regeneration into their own hands. This could be as simple as the council taking a step back and transferring properties into the hands of CLTs.

How will we measure success?

- Increase in the number of community asset transfers.
- Increase in the number of assets on community assets register.
- Increase in the number of community land trusts.

Outcome 4: Wealth that exists in the Wirral is harnessed to increase investment in local communities.

In the past, regeneration in post-industrial towns has relied on attracting national and international inward investment. Regeneration based on this type of investment can be volatile and often comes with conditions (e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy exemptions or grants from Government to encourage companies to invest). In this scenario, capital acts as a master. Alternatively, Community Wealth building aims for stakeholder finance, where capital acts as a friend and partner working to support the finance needs of the community. We can increase investment in local economies by harnessing the wealth that exists locally, instead of attracting national or international capital.

What is Wirral already doing?

- Wirral, along with Liverpool, Preston and the Community Savings Bank Association are looking to set up a North West Community Bank. Setting up a community bank is a key way to keep wealth in the borough. It will also help to address financial exclusion, by ensuring that our residents have access to financial services. Our approach to financial exclusion is detailed in the appendix.
- Power to Change, have a nationwide £150million fund to

support community businesses. Power to Change are keen to support and grow the sector in Wirral, starting with an event in Birkenhead Town Hall October 2019. We are looking to develop this further with the Wirral Chamber of Commerce.

What else will Wirral do?

1. **Work with Power to Change, Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Community Action Wirral and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to grow the community business sector.** Crucially, we will ensure that any grant-led investment is focused around increasing financial resilience, so our social businesses are able to survive beyond initial funding cycles and achieve long-term stability.
2. **Explore opportunities around increasing investment into the Wirral from the Merseyside pension fund.** Wirral Council is the administrator of the Merseyside Pension Fund. A £9billion fund that has members in 208 organisations across Merseyside. MPF has the Catalyst Fund for local investment. This fund is 1% of the Merseyside pension fund (£90million) has invested £42million over three loan facilities to projects all based in Liverpool. There needs to be more

consideration to the spread of this fund, to ensure that is fairly distributed across all the councils in the Liverpool City Region, and that investments build local wealth. We will work with other councils in the LCR and with the Merseyside Pension Fund to ensure that this occurs. We should also explore the possibility of increasing this fund. The Lancashire Pension Fund (£8billion) is slightly smaller than the Merseyside pension fund (£9billion) yet has committed to £100million of investments in Preston and a further £100million in the rest of Lancashire.

How will we measure success?

- Number of Wirral residents and businesses banking with the North West community bank.
- Amount of funds raised through crowdfunding.
- Money, time and support invested by Power to Change.
- Number of social business created through support from Power to Change.
- Money invested in the Wirral from the Merseyside Pension Fund.

Outcome 5: Residents of Wirral are in secure and quality employment with progression opportunities and good terms and conditions.

Anchor institutions often have thousands of staff and it is up to us to lead the way and increase recruitment from within areas of high unemployment and deprivation, commit to paying the real living wage and build progression routes for workers to encourage them to stay and work in the area. Anchor institutions can also use the power of procurement to ensure that businesses in their supply chains are held to the best possible standards.

What is Wirral already doing?

Many anchor institutions in Wirral already employ mostly Wirral Residents. There are a number of other programmes to support our residents to find work.

- The Wirral Ways to Work Programme supports eligible young people into education, employment and training. Wirral Ways to Work is funded in part by the European Union and has supported over 2800 residents into employment or further training.
- Wirral apprenticeship scheme looks to employ young residents of the Wirral in the Council. The scheme follows gives young people the skills they need to succeed, provides them with good quality jobs, and helps to develop the future workforce of the council.

- Discussions are taking place with the Wirral Partnership to link workforce priorities.

What else will Wirral do?

1. **Link Workforce priorities across anchor institutions.** Work with our anchor institutions to ensure that talent stays in the borough, considering sideways movements across anchor institutions to develop skills while not losing talent to surrounding boroughs. Work within the Liverpool City Region to ensure that Local Wealth Building is at the core of the Local Industrial Strategy.
2. **Investigate methods to advance social inclusion through apprenticeship funding and in work progression.** Build on our successes with the Wirral Ways to Work and apprenticeship scheme. These programmes could form a vital part of the Social Business Network by providing extra staff to cooperatives and community businesses. Advance social inclusion through employment creation e.g. Social Care as a workforce opportunity should be considered as a key priority; ideas and methods of delivery, such as training school leavers to work in care or attracting workers into the sector with the promise of a

structured 'skills escalator', should be investigated.

- 3. Ensure that workers in the businesses we procure goods and services from treat their employees fairly.** Build on our social value policy to include employee terms and conditions in our measures e.g. are employees paid at least the real living wage and have secure employment (i.e. no zero-hour contracts). Part of this work will also involve collaboration with trade union to ensure best practice in all procurement supply chains.

How will we measure success?

- Percentage of people claiming out of work benefits in targeted areas recruitment areas.
- Percentage of young people aged 16 and 17 who are NEET or categorised as 'not known'.
- Percentage of people earning on or above the real living wage.
- Number of new apprenticeships starts.
- Decrease in the number of employees on zero-hour contracts.

Appendix 1: Financial Inclusion

Introduction

'Financial inclusion' means that individuals, regardless of their background or income, have access to useful, affordable and appropriate financial products and services. These include products and services such as banking, credit, insurance, pensions and savings, as well as transactions and payment systems, and the use of financial technology (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019). Not having access to these products and services is known as financial exclusion.

Financial inclusion relates to access to financial products and services; *financial capability* is a person's ability to manage their money well, and also includes their capacity to use, and maximise their use of, financial products and services.

Since the introduction of basic bank accounts (accounts with no overdraft facility, designed for those with bad credit scores), the number of people in the UK without a bank account has decreased, although there are still 1.25 million 'unbanked' in the UK. This is generally taken as a guide to the amount of people who are financially excluded. It is questionable whether holding a basic bank account constitutes true financial inclusion, as this figure does not take into account the amount of people that are unable to access affordable credit, are unable to pay for bills via direct debit or have no insurance, pensions or savings. Using the DWP's definition of financial inclusion indicates that there may be as many as 13 million people that are financially excluded (Financial Inclusion Commission , 2015).

People can fall in and out of financial exclusion at any point in their lives. Low income and unemployment are by far the biggest indicators of financial exclusion, but there are other groups at risk. Those most at risk of financial exclusion are: young people not in employment, education or training; care leavers; lone parents; people with disabilities or mental health problems; carers; people with poor or no credit history; people with County Court Judgements against them; people living in isolated or disadvantaged areas; prisoners and ex-offenders and families of prisoners; people from minority ethnic communities; migrants; refugees and asylum seekers; older people; women; housing association tenants; people who are homeless and people with a post office card account or basic bank account (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008).

The Government have taken some steps to tackle financial exclusion, such as setting up the financial inclusion policy forum. The forum has led to a feasibility study for a no-interest loans scheme, a prize-linked savings scheme pilot for credit unions and a £2 million fund harnessing UK fintech innovation to help social and community lenders. Fair4all Finance has also been established to deliver £55 million from dormant assets towards financial inclusion initiatives over the next three years.

Understanding Financial Exclusion

Financial exclusion is a complex issue and people can be excluded from one or a number of financial products and services:

Banking

There are 1.25 million people in the UK without a bank account – a group of people who are clearly financially excluded. However, simply having a bank account is not a clear indication of financial inclusion, as about half of basic bank account holders prefer to withdraw all their money each week and manage it as cash. Some people prefer to do this because it gives them more control over their finances than using a bank account that does not suit their needs, or because they have a basic bank account that comes only with a cash card (National Consumer Council, 2005).

Savings

Savings are important for financial resilience, yet there are 13 million people in the UK who do not have enough savings to support them for one month if they experienced a 25% cut in income. For some people, savings products are not suitable or rewarding enough when savings small sums. For others their monthly budget simply does not stretch to allow for savings.

Credit

The financial inclusion commission estimate that at least £3 million people in the UK use high cost credit as they are unable to access any other forms of credit. High cost credit includes high cost short term credit (payday loans), home collected credit, catalogue credit and store cards, rent to own, buy now pay later offers and overdrafts.

For many households, credit is a necessity that is used to pay for everyday essentials; In 2013, 77% of people who took out a payday loan used it to pay for food (Friends Provident Foundation, 2016). The demand for low-cost credit is high, and without which many people find themselves turning to high cost credit to supplement their income. There are few options available: high cost, high pressure (but licensed) sub-prime lenders and informal and illegal borrowing. Research has found that lenders on the subprime market often have high APRs, additional costs and confusing and punitive terms and conditions. This can lead families into an endless cycle of borrowing and debt (Whyley, 2010). Fees and charges can further increase the cost of credit; in 2016, more than 50% of bank's unarranged overdraft fees came from just 1.5% of customers. People in deprived areas are more likely to incur these fees.

Access to cash

The amount of transactions carried out in cash has reduced from 6 in 10, in 2009 to 3 in 10 today. Many people still rely on cash, with 9% saying that they withdraw cash to avoid the risk of overspending. People in more deprived areas are more likely to rely on cash for day to day spending, yet deprived areas have been hardest hit by ATM closures, with 5.7% of free cash machines closed compared to 3.9% in the more affluent areas. Holding a basic bank account can further restrict access to cash, with

8% of basic bank account holders finding accessing free cash difficult compared to 4% of standard current account holders (Access to Cash , 2019).

Insurance

Half of households in the bottom half of the income distribution do not have home contents insurance. This is a concern, as households without home contents insurance are three times more likely to be burgled than households with insurance (Financial Inclusion Commission , 2015). There are a number of reasons why households do not hold insurance:

- For households on a budget, insurance premiums are often low on the list of priorities.
- Home contents insurance usually has a minimum value limit, leading households to be over insured.

Insurance products on offer are neither appropriate nor affordable for those on low incomes.

Reasons for Financial Exclusion

People can face financial exclusion in one of more of the ways outlined below:

Geographical exclusion

Financial exclusion can result from branch closures. Elderly people who may not be confident using online banking and those in deprived areas are most likely to be geographically excluded. High street banks have collectively closed 990 branches in the most deprived areas of the country since 2010, compared with 230 in the richest local authorities. Also on the increase is the number of families that are geographically excluded (Financial Inclusion Commission , 2015). It is often assumed that families can avoid this type of exclusion through use of the internet, however many families only have internet on their phone, and many financial products can only be applied for through the full website, not the mobile site.

Condition exclusion

Failure to qualify for products because of the minimum deposit required, poor credit history or identity requirements. People with insecure housing, or without a home will have trouble producing the necessary documents to verify their address. People with low income and no identity documents may not be able to afford to purchase a form of photographic identity or replace items such as birth certificates. Condition exclusion can also include exclusion from direct debits, and their associated savings. Those with poor credit history will often be forced onto prepayment energy systems that can cost significantly more than direct debits.

Price exclusion

This is related to the relative cost of financial products and services such as unauthorised overdrafts or insurance.

Marketing exclusion

Some less profitable groups of customers are not targeted by providers and so they are unaware of the financial services available. Banks tend to not advertise basic bank accounts as they operate at a loss for the bank as they cannot generate income from overdraft charges.

Self-exclusion

Cultural and psychological barriers can contribute to financial exclusion, seeing financial services as 'not for people like us'.

Financial Capability

Financial capability relates to a person's ability to use, and maximise their use of, financial products and services. Financial exclusion and financial capability are linked; however, it is important to note that financial exclusion is not caused by financial incapability. People on higher incomes can have low financial capability but will have a 'cushion' of financial assets and access to affordable credit that prevents them from becoming financially excluded.

The Financial Services Authority (2006) (replaced by the Financial Conduct Authority in 2013) identified the five areas of financial capability as:

1. Being able to manage money;
2. Keeping track of finances;
3. Planning ahead;
4. Choosing financial products; and
5. Staying informed about financial matters.

To improve financial inclusion, it is essential that individuals feel confident and capable of making the right decisions for themselves and their families.

The challenge here is how to ensure residents become more financially capable. The best empirical work finds that financial education is not likely to have major lasting effects on knowledge and especially on behaviour. It can however increase confidence and provide people with different options for accessing credit and savings products.

The Financial Conduct Authority found that 61% of payday loan borrowers and 41% of short-term instalment borrowers have a lower level of confidence managing their money than the wider adult population (24%).

Implications of financial exclusion

The Poverty Premium

It has been shown that households with low income pay more for goods and services. This is known as the poverty premium and is estimated at an average of £490 per household per year (Davies, Finney, & Hartfree, 2016). Low income and poverty are the biggest indicator of financial exclusion; the two issues are deeply linked and ensuring that residents are financially included can reduce the poverty premium paid by those who can least afford it.

The University of Bristol has found that the poverty premium is paid through the following categories:

1. Use of prepayment meters for fuel - £38
2. Use of non-standard methods of bill payment (excluding prepayment meters) - £84
3. Not switched to best fuel tariff - £233
4. Paper billing - £12
5. Area-based premiums (e.g. insurance and grocery shopping) - £84
6. Insurance of individual items - £27
7. Access to money (e.g. fee charging cash machines) - £9
8. Higher cost credit - £55

Not all low income households experience all of the categories, and the premiums households experience can range from an average of £350 among 'premium minimisers' to £750 among the 'highly exposed' (Davies, Finney, & Hartfree, 2016).

The categories through which households pay the poverty premium are directly linked to the financial exclusion definition. It is clear that those on low incomes subject to the poverty premium are not able to access financial products that are useful, affordable or appropriate.

Debt

Financial debt has increased in the UK; driven by an increase in both the levels of debt, and the number of households with debt (Office for National Statistics, 2018). After adjusting for inflation, credit, store and charge card debt increased by £1 billion (4%) from 2016 to 2018. The poorest households are more likely to have financial debt, and this debt is more likely to make up a large proportion of their total wealth. In 2018, the lowest income household's total value of debt was three times the total value of their wealth. From the years 2016 to 2018, 15% of the poorest households had problem debt.

High Cost Short Term Credit (HCSTC), also known as payday loans, have become part of many household's financial management. Changes made by the Financial Conduct Authority to payday loans (including price caps and stronger guidance around credit checks) have decreased the number of payday loans from their highest in 2013 (around 10 million loans per year) to 5.4 million in 2018. They are however, on the increase. The FCA found that those using HCSTC are likely to be overindebted.

Non-Financial Implications

While the effect of financial exclusion on health wellbeing has not been thoroughly researched, there is research that documents the negative impact of debt on an

individual's physical and mental health (Sweet, 2013) (Jenkins, 2008) (Drentea, 2000). The view of debt as a personal failure is associated with significantly worse health across a range of measures, including blood pressure, adiposity, self-reported physical and emotional symptoms, depression, anxiety, and perceived stress (Sweet E. , 2018). Poor health related to debt can become a vicious cycle: time off work due to depression or other health problems caused by debt can leave the individual with less money to reduce their debt, which could cause a further deterioration in their health.

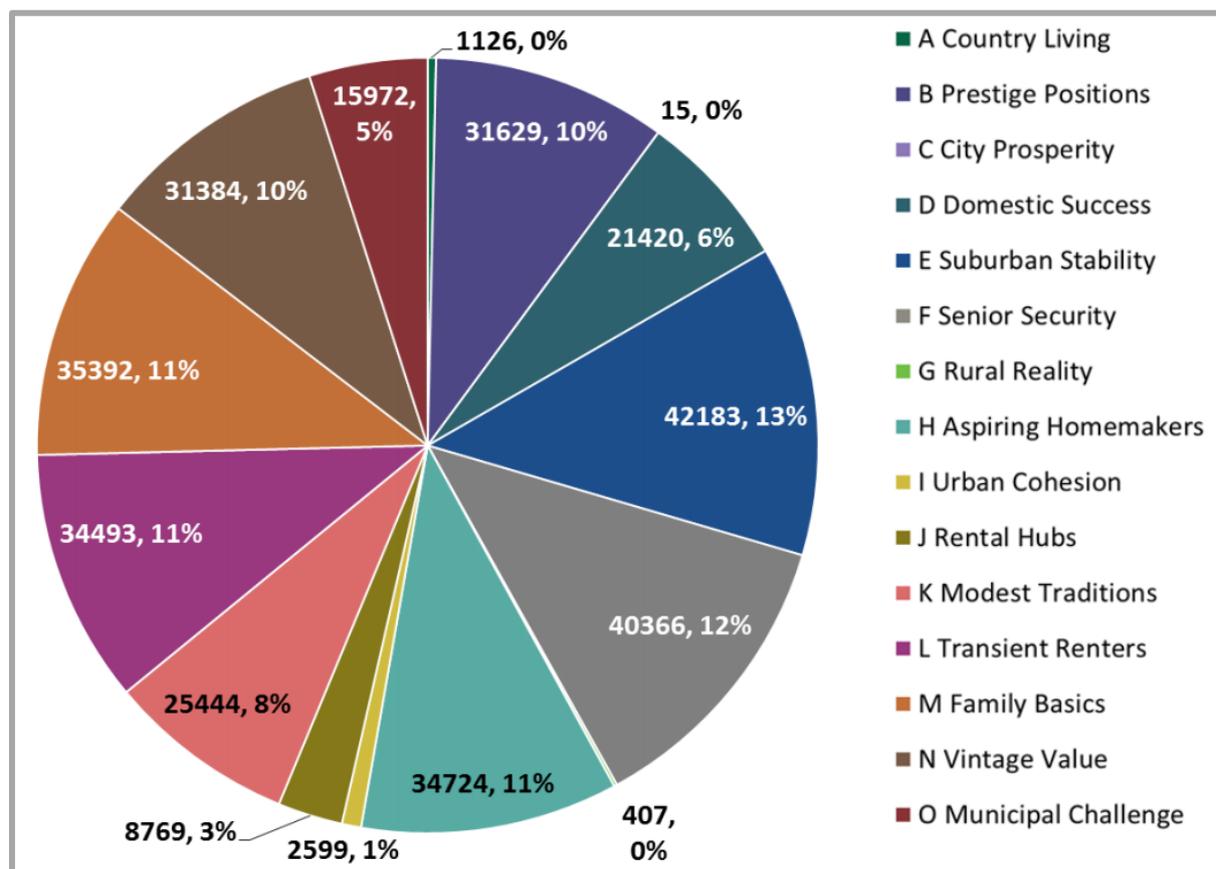
The Wirral Context

17.4% of Wirral residents experience income deprivation. This overall figure however masks the large variation between areas. For example, 58% of residents in Birkenhead East Float face income deprivation compared to 0% in Caldy South. Of the Borough's 206 Lower Super Output areas, 65 are classed as being in the 20% most income deprived in England. 64 of these are in the east of the borough. Low income is the biggest indicator of financial exclusion; using the figure of 17.4% indicates that more than 56,000 residents of the Wirral are at risk.

Other groups at risk of financial exclusion are the unemployed and those with mental health problems. 3.6% of people in Wirral claim benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. This is slightly higher than the Northwest (3.3%) and higher than England as a whole (2.6%). Again, this figure again masks the large variation in claimants between wards, with 10% of residents in Birkenhead and Tranmere claiming benefits for unemployment compared to 0.8% for Clatterbridge. Residents with mental health conditions account for more than half of the total (52%) of ESA claims. This rate is slightly higher in the more deprived wards, accounting for 60% of claims in Birkenhead and Tranmere.

Mosaic profiling can also be used to estimate the amount of people in Wirral at risk of financial exclusion. Mosaic is a geo-demographic population classification tool. It is constructed from a range of sources including the Census, consumer behaviour, financial data, hospital episode statistics (HES) and lifestyle factor data. The table below gives a short description of Mosaic groups:

Mosaic Group	Short description
A Country Living	Well-off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life
B Prestige Positions	Established families in large detached homes living upmarket lifestyles
C City Prosperity	High status city dwellers pursuing careers with high rewards
D Domestic Success	Thriving families who are busy bringing up children and following careers
E Suburban Stability	Mature suburban owners living settled lives in mid-range housing
F Senior Security	Older people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement
G Rural Reality	Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities
H Aspiring Homemakers	Younger households settling down in housing priced within their means
I Urban Cohesion	Residents of settled urban communities with a strong sense of identity
J Rental Hubs	Educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods
K Modest Traditions	Mature homeowners of value homes enjoying stable lifestyles
L Transient Renters	Single people privately renting low cost homes for the short term
M Family Basics	Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet
N Vintage Value	Elderly people reliant on support to meet financial or practical needs
O Municipal Challenge	Urban renters of social housing facing an array of challenges



The following profiles in Wirral are most at risk of financial exclusion, and are concentrated on the east of the borough:

L – Transient Renters: Single people privately renting low cost homes for the short term.

Although this group has an average household income of £20,000 - £29,000, they are young (18-25), private renters with a low length of residence. Having a low length of residence could leave them conditionally excluded from financial products and services by not having proof of address.

M – Family basics: Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet.

Families budgeting to make ends meet are unlikely to have savings, making them vulnerable to financial knocks that could lead them into high cost credit. Low income puts this group at risk of financial exclusion.

N – Vintage Value: Elderly people reliant on support to meet financial or practical needs.

Elderly people that need to support for financial or practical needs will also need support to be financially included. This group may be particularly vulnerable to bank branch closures, as only 30% of people aged 65+ use online banking.

O – Municipal Challenge: Urban renters of social housing facing an array of challenges.

Mosaic data shows that this group is most likely to be unbanked and therefore most at risk of financial exclusion.

Using the mosaic profiles indicates that there are over 117,000 residents of Wirral likely to be at risk of financial exclusion.

Strategic Context

This strategy should be viewed in conjunction with the Community Wealth Building strategy and the Wirral 2025 plan. This strategy supports the Wirral 2025 plan priorities Inclusive Economy and Brighter Futures.

Access to savings products, insurance and affordable credit can help to support the inclusive economy and brighter futures priorities by ensuring that our poorest residents aren't paying more for goods and services.

This strategy will support brighter futures by ensuring that families have access to financial products and services as well as the financial capability to choose the right products for them. This will contribute to their financial resilience, making sure that families are able to withstand financial knocks such as job loss or burglaries, and be able to access affordable credit if an unexpected expense arises. The Inclusive Economy priority of the Wirral 2025 plan has a focus on building an economy that works for people and place and this cannot be delivered if some of our residents are outside of the financial system.

Financial exclusion reinforces social exclusion. It is not just an individual problem; a whole community can suffer from under-investment in financial services. As such, financial inclusion initiatives can form an important part of regeneration and community wealth building.

Strategic Objectives and Outcomes

1. Support residents find employment in stable, well paid jobs.

Low income and unemployment are by far the biggest indicator of financial exclusion, and so a key strategic objective should be to ensure that residents our residents are in stable, high quality jobs. This is a key target objective of many strategies in the council, including the community wealth building strategy and the Wirral 2025 Plan.

Outcomes

- More residents helped into work.
- More residents earning the real living wage.
- More residents in education, employment or training.

2. Help overindebted residents to overcome their debt and promote responsible borrowing.

Outcomes

- More residents accessing a full range of advice and guidance.
- More residents aware of illegal and high-risk borrowing.
- More residents are aware of the physical and mental health issues related to debt.
- Fewer residents with multiple or problem debt.

3. Improve access to mainstream financial products and services and ensure that residents have the knowledge and confidence to make financial decisions that are right for them.

Outcomes

- More residents have access to basic bank accounts.
- More residents have access to affordable credit options.
- More residents will be saving regularly
- Residents will be more aware of different financial products and services
- Residents will be more confident in making financial decisions

Working in Partnership

There are a number of organisations in the Wirral already working to support residents with financial and debt advice, such as the Wirral Advisory Centre, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Wirral Credit Union. There are health implications to financial exclusion and as such we will work in partnership with Wirral CCG and other health partners to deliver on these outcomes. It is essential that we engage and work with the wider partnership to deliver this strategy to ensure that Wirral is a place where residents have access to the products, services, knowledge and confidence to manage their finances.



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

REPORT TITLE:	USE OF COUNCIL BUILDINGS FOR CIVIC, COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS
REPORT OF:	ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – DAVID ARMSTRONG

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with an update and recommendation in respect of proposed arrangements for the safe operation of Council meetings for the administrative year 2021/22 giving due consideration to guidance and regulations arising from Covid-19.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. That the arrangements for the safe operation of Council and Committee meetings to continue at the Floral Pavilion for a six-month period from May 2021 be approved, with a potential review in September 2021.
2. That, in the interim, a Member Working Group be established to consist of eight Members (3;2;1;1;1) to consider and report back to the Committee on:
 - a) a review of the outcome of the HM Government Roadmap Review and revised Covid Regulations and/or Guidance following publication;
 - b) the implications of the impact that the Roadmap Review may have on Council and Committee Meetings in the context of the Council's estate; and
 - c) consideration of the works and investment required to enable Wallasey Town Hall to operate Council and Committee meetings going forward in a safe and compliant manner.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The flexibility for meetings of the Council and Committees to be held remotely came to an end as of 7th May 2021. From that point onwards the Council requires a safe and compliant environment in which to operate in-person meetings.
- 1.2 The Council must comply with its duties to its employees, members and visitors when operating Council buildings and sites. Whilst this has been enshrined in law for many years the new demands in the safe operation of buildings following Covid have implications for the Council estate including those buildings which operate Civic arrangements.
- 1.3 The Council must give due consideration to advice from HM Government and Public Health England. The Council is currently waiting upon revision to the Covid Regulations, expected in June 2021. Alongside this, there is also an ongoing Government review (the 'Roadmap Review') due to be published concerning working arrangements.
- 1.4 Weighing the various matters in early May 2021, an assessment of buildings available, including cost but primarily current and potential Covid related requirements and advice, led to booking meeting space at the Floral Pavilion (auditorium briefly but then conference rooms) for Council and Committee meetings for a six-month period.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 An update was provided on the future of remote Committee meetings to the Constitution and Standards Committee in February 2021, where it was explained that the legislative changes required to allow remote Committee meetings to continue once the regulations set out in the Coronavirus Act 2020 expire on 7 May 2021, had not yet been confirmed. Councils have since been advised that in-person meetings are required from 7 May 2021. The Council therefore cannot consider the continuation of hybrid or virtual meetings at this time for decision making meetings.
- 2.2 Alternative accommodation options to host Council and Committee meetings are discussed within the body of this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In spite of the additional demands and challenges placed on Members and Officers by virtue of the Covid-19 pandemic, a full programme of Committee meetings was embarked upon following the adoption of the new Constitution in September 2020 and prior to that, Regulatory Committees and selected other Committees continued to meet between April and September 2020 predominantly to consider planning and

licensing matters. The Council enabled the safe operation of Council and Committee meetings through virtual means.

- 3.2 Regulations which have allowed local authorities to meet remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic do not apply to meetings after 6 May. HM Government advised that it concluded it was not possible to secure primary legislation to extend the regulations to meetings beyond this date. This means that councils need to return to face-to-face meetings.
- 3.3 Following the application by Hertfordshire County Council, the Association of Democratic Service Officers, Lawyers in Local Government and the Local Government Association, the High Court has issued a judgment that the Local Government Act 1972 does not allow local authorities to hold meetings virtually. The High Court concluded that existing legislation specifies that council meetings must take place in person at a single, specified, geographical location and being “present” at such a meeting involves physical presence at that location.
3. The Secretary of State recognised there may continue to be concerns about holding face-to-face meetings and advised it is for local authorities to apply the Covid-19 guidance to ensure meetings take place safely. HM Government advise that they recognise that there has been a considerable investment of time, training and technology to enable meetings to take place over the last year and have a review in progress on the future of remote meetings.
- 3.5 The Government has published updated guidance to highlight ways in which councils can, if necessary, minimise the need for, or risks of, face-to-face meetings. The Council is currently operating meetings from the Floral Pavilion for a period to enable in-person meetings to operate within the guidance and Regulations. The Floral Pavilion is a modern theatre with large auditorium and conference facilities which operates high-tech heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The Floral Pavilion can therefore operate such meetings safely and compliantly. All Councils across the country are having to give consideration to these issues and a number of Councils are using theatres and leisure centres to operate Council meetings.
- 3.6 **Covid Safe**
 - 3.6.1 To support Councils to operate meetings within Council buildings HM Government have provided guidance on the safe operation of buildings ([COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of council buildings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings)) and the guidance relating to Main Halls and Council Chambers (covered under the [COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities)). However, Members should note that this guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.
 - 3.6.2 COVID-19 is a workplace hazard. The associated risks should be managed in the same way as other workplace hazards. This includes completing a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identifying control measures to manage that risk. These measures include undertaking regular

risk assessment, cleaning regimes, social distancing, face coverings, ventilation requirements, test and trace processes and arrangements for managing a case of covid-19. In addition, broader preventative approaches are also recommended; including working from home where possible, reducing face to face meetings, communicating and training staff on safety measures and monitoring impact to ensure that the controls continue to protect customers and workers. This guidance considers employees, agency workers, contractors and other people including Elected Members. HM Government continue to advise employees to work from home wherever possible until a review of social distancing measures is completed nationally. By Step 4 which will take place no earlier than 21 June, the government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact. However, HM Government has indicated that even then 'COVID-Secure' measures should remain in place. All sites remain subject to strict re-mobilisation processes.

- 3.6.3 The application of recommended measures is intended to mitigate, rather than eliminate, the risk of covid-19 transmission. The incidence of Covid-19 in the local community is aligned to the risk of transmission. Rates of Covid-19 in Wirral are at the time of writing this report low, reflecting the national situation, therefore enabling the gradual easing of social contact restrictions as the risk of transmission is reduced. However, this follows a period of suppression resulting from the 'lockdown' period and the rollout of the vaccination programme. It is anticipated that numbers of Covid-19 will increase following a period of easing and increased social contact and that the later stages of the roadmap out of lockdown are "highly likely" to cause a surge of Covid-19 infections and hospital admissions through late summer/early autumn. Providing COVID-secure buildings for staff and Elected Members to work within, and the wider public to visit, as restrictions are progressively lifted, is therefore crucial.
- 3.6.4 It is also important to acknowledge that the national roadmap is not sensitive to local data therefore any local risk assessment needs to consider the local position in relation to the 4 tests for easing as set out by HM Government. These include incidence and mortality rates, hospitals admissions, vaccination coverage and variants of concern. As well as the boroughwide position, within Wirral data will need to be considered, as there is variation in case rates, outcomes and vaccination coverage in different parts of Wirral. Measures to reduce risk should respond to the local data which could include full and partial building closures.
- 3.7 **Roadmap Reviews**
- 3.8 HM Government have advised that roadmap reviews will be completed before moving to Step 4. The Social Distancing Review is exploring whether existing rules, designed to limit virus transmission, could be relaxed in different settings. This work is developing the safest approach to allow closer social contact between friends and family, safely enable greater capacity on transport, and reduce distance requirements within venues and workplaces.
- 3.9 The review is looking at key baseline measures, including how and when to safely lift or amend the 1m+ rule and related COVID-secure measures, as well as guidance on working from home. It is also looking at what guidance can be provided to enable individuals to take informed personal choices. The conclusion will depend on the latest data and evidence on the state of the pandemic and the impact of vaccine

effectiveness, as the country progresses through the roadmap. The extent of any relaxation in social distancing measures is linked to the questions being explored by the COVID-Status Certification Review - including whether COVID-status certification can enable changes to social distancing. At the time of writing the Council does not have this information and the date for publication of the review(s) is currently unknown. On the 18 May 2021, a Government spokesperson advised the review could be delayed as a result of Covid-19 variant rates. The resilience of any arrangements to deliver safe Council and Committee meetings should be considered.

3.10 Wallasey Town Hall

- 3.11 Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Council and Committee meetings took place in the Chamber and Committee rooms available within the Civic spaces available at Wallasey Town Hall. The Town Hall also provided asset-based services including Taxi Licencing and One Stop Shop services as well as office and meeting space for Council Officers and Elected Members.
- 3.12 Wallasey Town Hall has been closed to service users, Members and staff since March 2020 except for pre-arranged visits to collect items. Access to the Town Hall continues to be required periodically by arrangement for specific reasons to support business continuity, this includes accessing legal documents held in a secure way. Such access is strictly controlled, and a risk assessment is in place for this activity. All services have been relocated and the office space at the Town Hall is not currently required with staff operating in a hybrid arrangement.
- 3.13 An early assessment of Wallasey Town Hall using the current guidance highlighted that the Chamber and Committee Rooms would not meet requirements. Further considerations extending to airflow and ventilation highlighted that there is currently no space in the Town Hall which could extend to Council or Committee meetings. Wallasey Town Hall does not benefit from modern Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. For example, whilst the Main Hall may be large enough to sit a Committee meeting using social distancing, the ventilation arrangements would require all windows in the hall to be open to 30 degrees for the period of the meeting. This would provoke issues relating to weather conditions, thermal comfort, and external noise. Such considerations include meeting the guidelines from Approved Document Part 'F' and 'CIBSE' guidance documentation where this assists in an assessing the passive ventilation available to each room. This assessment is carried out by those with professional competency and experience in interpreting these guidance documents. A detailed assessment is underway which will provide further information relating to the work and processes required to enable access and operation of the Town Hall.
- 3.14 Subject to the roadmap reviews as set out in paras 3.8 thru 3.10 and the asset and facilities management implications arising it is anticipated that investment will be required to achieve compliance with guidance at Wallasey Town Hall. This is likely to include access systems and Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. This would require that each area to be occupied be assessed and calculated by specialists in this field to determine sufficient air movement and fresh air supply and extract demands and along with this a necessity for a conservation

architect to determine appropriate adjustments to a Grade II listed building in such a programme. Risk assessments and relevant protocols will also be required in line with public health guidance, HSE guidance and legislation. Wirral Council will be required to update its own policies and procedures following the outcome of the review(s).

3.15 Birkenhead Town Hall

3.16 Members should note that similar issues exist at Birkenhead Town Hall, built in 1887 and Grade II listed. An early assessment of Birkenhead Town Hall using the current guidance highlighted that the Assembly Rooms and Hall could not support Council or Committee meetings requirements due to social distancing and ventilation issues.

3.18 Limited and managed operational activity has restarted at this site for business continuity purposes where it can do so safely subject to infection prevention control arrangements as identified in risk assessments.

3.19 Subject to the roadmap reviews as set out in paras 3.8 thru 3.10 and the asset and facilities management implications arising, it is anticipated that investment will be required to achieve compliance with guidance at Birkenhead Town Hall.

3.20 Proposed Way Forward

3.21 It is proposed that Committee agrees that meetings continue at the Floral Pavilion for the six-month period from May 2021 with the ability to review the situation as of September 2021. During this period also, it is intended that the Mayor's Parlour will be based at Birkenhead Town Hall, with all Mayoral activities following relevant guidance.

3.22 The Committee should note that only decision-making committees require in-person meetings and therefore Elected Members should consider where possible continuing with virtual meeting arrangements. Should Elected Members require meeting space or access to buildings and workstations, facilities management teams will work with Elected Members to support such requests utilising the broader Council estate.

3.23 It is proposed that during that timeframe a Member Working Group is established to consider and report back to the Committee to provide a recommended way forward on:

- a) a review of the outcome of the HM Government Roadmap Review. (Members should note that the outcome and publishing date for the review is unknown at the time of report writing);
- b) the implications of the impact that the Roadmap Review may have on Council and Committee Meetings in the context of Wirral's estate; and
- c) consideration of the works and investment required to enable Wallasey Town Hall to operate Council and Committee meetings in a safe and compliant manner.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The operation of meetings at the Floral Pavilion is subject to internal recharge arrangements and therefore currently does not raise broader financial implications. However, in the longer term the booking of auditorium or conference space for Council meetings may see revenue loss for the venue (subject to future operating arrangements).
- 4.2 IT costs for the mobilisation of Council meetings at the Floral Pavilion are circa £2,500 associated with the purchase of additional cabling and a necessary upgrade to the Public I web-casting software.
- 4.3 A full cost appraisal of works required at Wallasey Town Hall will set out further financial implications. This will consider the most appropriate funding mechanisms for any works - which could include Covid tranche monies, maintenance budgets and capital works.
- 4.4 The annual running costs (taken from the last full pre-Covid year) of Wallasey Town Hall are £387,628.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 have ceased to be of effect in accordance with the Coronavirus Act 2020. This legislation had included a 'sunset clause' that ensured it was of effect for a limited time only.
- 5.2 On 25th March 2021 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to Local Authorities to advise that these regulations would not be extended, ceasing on 7th May 2021, necessitating the resumption of face-to-face meetings from this date.
- 5.3 The operation of in-person meetings in order to make a lawful decision can be achieved only through the requirements of Local Government Act 1972. Other forms of meeting, for briefing, discursive or other purposes, can continue to do so through remote means.
- 5.4 Covid Regulations remain in force at the time of writing this report.
- 5.5 Further Government guidance in relation to the operation of meetings and associated accommodation is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no staffing or ICT implications arising from this report. The implications relating to assets are addressed in the body of the report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Risk assessments for the use of the Floral Pavilion for Council and Committee Meetings are completed and regularly reviewed.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Plans and preparations have been developed to recommence face to face meetings in a way that intends to reduce covid related risks. This work has been overseen by a team of officers, including representatives from Public Health and Health & Safety. A report was submitted to the Constitution and Standards Committee in February 2021, a further update was submitted to the Member Steering Group in March 2021. Regular updates were provided to Group Leaders at their meetings in March/April 2021.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An equality impact assessment for the use of the Floral Pavilion for Council and Committee Meetings has been completed.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Floral Pavilion is a theatre with modern climate and HVAC (Heating, ventilation & air conditioning) systems which will provide an efficient and optimised safe operating environment.
- 10.2 Wallasey Town Hall was built over 100 years ago. The building is not as efficient in terms of heating and energy usage as the Floral Pavilion and therefore the temporary arrangements at the Floral will see a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- 10.3 The review of requirements at Wallasey Town Hall will set out the implications of re-mobilisation of that site including those pertaining to the environment and climate.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Council Constitution
Remote Meetings Update, Constitution and Standards Committee 24/2/21
The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

The Local Government Act 1972
Covid-19 Guidance for the Safe Use of Council Buildings – April 2021
Equality Impact Assessment – Floral Pavilion
Floral Pavilion Council Meetings Risk Assessment

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Constitution and Standards Committee	24/2/21

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

REPORT TITLE:	APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE (MONITORING OFFICER)

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to enable the Policy and Resources Committee, in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions and the terms of the Constitution, to appoint Members to the four Sub-Committees of the Policy and Resources Committee for 2021 / 2022, these are:

- The Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee
- The Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee (and its Working Group)
- The Finance and Procurement Sub-Committee
- The Shareholder Board

Unless appointed as full members; the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the political groups represented on the Council are entitled to attend meetings of all Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels, with the right to speak at the invitation of the Chair (Part 3 (B) Section 1 of the Council's constitution).

The decisions of the Committee regarding this report are not considered to be Key Decisions.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Policy and Resources Committee is requested to:-

- (1) (a) confirm that the Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee be appointed for 2021-22 with the terms of reference as referred to in paragraph 3.1 of this report and will consist of:
 - (i) the leader (Chair of Policy & Resources Committee), or in their absence the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair), who shall chair the Sub-Committee;
 - (ii) a member from each of the other Political Groups represented on the Policy & Resources Committee; and

(iii) the Chair, or in their absence the Vice-Chair, of the Policy & Services Committee with terms of reference most closely associated with the post concerned (or if that committee concerned is deemed to be the Policy & Resources Committee then the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair).

(b) appoint Members to serve on the Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee in 2021-22, including the appointment of the Chair and named deputies.

(2) (a) confirm that the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee be appointed for 2021-22 with the terms of reference identified with 5 Members of the Policy and Resources Committee, as well as Local Plan Working Group (terms of reference attached as Appendix 1).

(b) appoint Members to serve on the Local Plan Sub-Committee in 2021-22, including the appointment of named deputies.

(c) appoint Members to serve on the Local Plan Working Group in 2021-22, including the appointment of named deputies

(3) (a) confirm that the Finance and Procurement Sub-Committee be appointed for 2021-22 with the terms of reference identified with 5 Members of the Policy and Resources Committee.

(b) appoint Members to serve on the Finance and Procurement Sub-Committee in 2021-22, including the appointment of the Chair and named deputies.

(4) (a) confirm that the Shareholder Board be appointed for 2021-22 with the terms of reference identified with 3 Members of the Policy and Resources Committee.

(b) appoint Members to serve on the Shareholder Board in 2021-22, including the appointment of named deputies.

(5) authorise the Monitoring Officer as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership and substitute membership of those sub-committees listed in recommendations (1) to (4) above and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To enable the appointment of Members to the four Sub-Committees of the Policy and Resources Committee as listed in 3.1 below.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Part 2, Article 6.4 (iii) of the constitution states: sub-committees will normally be constituted of five (5) members, which may be altered to accommodate the overall political balance calculation, or be constituted of such other number as the parent Committee decides.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Sub-Committees of the Policy and Resources Committee are described as laid out below in the Constitution (Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions (B) Committee Terms of Reference):

Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee

- (a) A Sub-Committee of members of the Policy and Resources Committee, with delegated authority to recommend or make appointments and related matters in respect of chief officers and deputy chief officers, as set out at Part 4(7) of the Constitution, together with oversight of employment policies, terms and conditions.
- (b) The Sub-Committee will not be appointed in accordance with the political balance rules (as previously agreed by Council at its meeting on 28 September 2020 (minute 8 refers)) but will consist of:
- (i) the Leader (Chair of Policy & Resources Committee), or in their absence the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair), who shall chair the Sub-Committee;
 - (ii) a member from each of the other Political Groups represented on the Policy & Resources Committee; and
 - (iii) the Chair, or in their absence the Vice-Chair, of the Policy & Services Committee with terms of reference most closely associated with the post concerned (or if that committee concerned is deemed to be the Policy & Resources Committee then the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair).

Finance and Procurement Sub-Committee

A Sub-Committee of five (5) members of the Policy and Resources Committee, subject to political balance, with responsibility for development of the Council's budget and for oversight of the Council's procurement framework.

Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee

- (a) A Sub-Committee of five (5) members of the Policy and Resources Committee,

with responsibility for the Council's functions to formulate the policies and strategies that together will form the Council's other spatial planning documents (Local Plan). This Sub-Committee is time limited until the adoption of the Local Plan in development 2021/22.

- (b) The Sub-Committee will not be appointed in accordance with the political balance rules (as previously agreed by Council at its meeting on 19 October, 2020 (minute 21 refers)) but will consist of one Member from each of the Council's political groups.
- (c) The Local Plan Working Group's membership will also reflect that of the Sub-Committee in being made up of one member from each of the Council's political groups.

Shareholder Board

A Sub-Committee of three (3) members of the Policy and Resources Committee, subject to political balance, with delegated authority to exercise responsibility for the Council's functions as corporate shareholder of a company, or group of companies or a limited liability partnership. The Sub-Committee will be organised, and will also meet as a working group, alongside officers and advisors in accordance with the Council's adopted Code of Practice for the Governance of Council Interests in Companies at Part 5(7) of this Constitution.

3.2 Proportionality:

Members must have regard to the requirements of section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and the relevant regulations (which deal with political balance on committees and sub-committees), and the terms of the High Court judgment in the case of R v Brent LBC ex-parte Gladbaum and Wood (which requires the relevant parent committee, rather than the Council, to appoint members of sub-committees and panels).

Part 2, Article 6.4 (iii) of the constitution states: sub-committees will normally be constituted of five (5) members, which may be altered to accommodate the overall political balance calculation, or be constituted of such other number as the parent Committee decides.

The political balance of the Finance and Procurement Sub-Committee, if kept to a minimum of 5 members should be:

2 Labour Members
2 Conservative Members
1 Liberal Democrat Member

Shareholder Board is recommended to be kept to a minimum of 3 members and the political balance should be:

2 Labour Members
1 Conservative Member

It was a decision of Council to change the requirements for political balance for both the Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub-Committee and the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee.

- 3.3 The Finance and Procurement and Shareholder Board Sub-Committees are subject to political balance regulation (S15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989).

Part 2, Section 6.4 (iii) of the constitution states:

“Sub-committees will normally be constituted of five (5) members, which may be altered to accommodate the overall political balance calculation, or be constituted of such other number as the parent Committee decides;”

It is noted that the Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee’s primary function is to make appointments or recommendations to Council on appointments regarding chief officers of the Council. In its alternative form the sub-committee exists to deal with disciplinary matters and appeals. There was considered to be an optimum size for such sub-committees and it was unanimously agreed at Annual Council on 28 September 2020 that this Sub-Committee be exempt from political proportionality. It was felt by all group leaders that it was important that all political groups on the Council had a vote on these matters.

It is also to be noted that the membership of the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee should be constituted in a manner that reflects that of the Local Plan Advisory Group, being one Member from each political group on the Council.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Chairs of the Finance and Procurement Sub-Committee and the Local Plan Sub-Committee are both entitled to a special responsibility allowance (SRA) of £4,800 under Part 6 of the Constitution – Members’ Allowances Scheme. These funds are accounted for within the Members’ Allowances Scheme.

It should be noted that under the Members’ Allowances Scheme, no councillor shall be entitled to receive more than one payment by way of a special responsibility allowance. Any councillor who is already receiving an SRA as Chair of a Policy and Services Committee, Group Leader etc shall not be entitled to additional payment as Chair of either of the Sub-Committees mentioned above as per paragraph 4.3 of the Members’ Allowances Scheme.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must allocate seats on committees and sub committees so as to give effect to the political balance rules. The rules for the allocation of seats are set out in Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Committee and Political Group Regulations 1990. The Act provides four principles concerning political representation that must be observed. The four principles are:-

- (a) That not all seats are allocated to the same political party.

- (b) That the political group with the majority of seats should have the majority of seats on each committee.
- (c) Subject to (a) and (b) that the total number of seats allocated to political groups on all committees (to which Section 15 of the Act applies), shall be in the same proportion as the total number of seats on the authority held by each political group.
- (d) Subject to (a) to (c) that the number of seats allocated to each political group on a committee (to which Section 15 of the Act applies), shall be the same as the proportion of the total number of seats on the authority held by each political group.

The legislation provides that the Council may make alternative arrangements to the 'proportionality' principles within this report only by a unanimous vote.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no direct risks arising from this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 It is for Members of the Policy and Resources Committee to decide how they wish to allocate places on the Sub-Committees.

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 There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environment and climate implications arising directly from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Local Plan Working Group Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Constitution of the Council
Members' Allowances Scheme

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	11 November 2020
Council	19 October 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	7 October 2020
Council	28 September 2020

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APPENDIX 1 - LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose of the Local Plan Working Group

To enable detailed consideration, guidance and support for the development of the Wirral Local Plan and to aid greater understanding of the key issues which the Local Plan must consider, and the reasonable options that exist to address those issues.

Role of the Local Plan Working Group

1. To consider and comment on documents that relate to the Local Plan including (but not restricted to) policy options, draft policies and evidence studies prepared to support the Plan.
2. To identify gaps in the evidence base and the mechanisms for addressing any such gap; to develop the outputs of technical work and other information into policy.
3. To make recommendations as required to the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and Council in respect of the development of the Local Plan.
4. To monitor progress on the preparation of the Local Plan (including in respect of the Direction of 28th January 2019 made to the Council by the Secretary of State and any further directions).
5. To provide updates to other Members including other relevant committees.
6. To consider and comment on responses to any plans being prepared by other local planning authorities (and the Combined Authority) as part of the duty to co-operate.

Membership of the Local Plan Working Group

1. The Advisory Group will comprise a member from each of the Council's political groups one of whom will be the Chair of the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee. In addition, Members of other Committees may be invited to attend as and when appropriate at the discretion of the Chair of the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee.
2. The Council's Substitution Scheme will apply
3. The Working Group will be chaired by the Chair of the Local Plan Steering Sub-Committee (unless he or she chooses not to) or otherwise a Chair will be selected by the Group from amongst its number.
4. The Working Group meetings must have at least 3 members to be quorate.

Local Plan Working Group Working Arrangements and Principles:

1. The Members be supported by officers and consultants as appropriate.
2. The Working Group has no decision-making powers. Its purpose is to aid greater understanding of issues, desires and policy development.

3. The focus of the Working Group is on key issues for the Local Plan, not all related detailed issues.
4. Meetings to be held on an 'as required' basis.
5. Meetings are not open to the public, but outcomes from the Working Group will be made available to all Members as appropriate.
6. The Working Group must be mindful of the direction of 28th January 2019 made by the Secretary of State to Wirral Borough Council under s.27 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
7. The purpose of the Working Group is to help speed up the Local Plan making, not delay it.
8. The Working Group will cease on formal adoption of the Local Plan by the Council.



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

REPORT TITLE:	CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update in relation to the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, specifically:

- An overview of this temporary fund and Wirral’s awarded allocation up to 21/22.
- The current position in relation to use of the fund to date, and the remainder to be allocated.
- An outline summary of emerging priorities and plans, supporting ongoing COVID-19 response and population health recovery over next twelve months.
- Recommendations relating to the development of future spending proposals for this fund, linked to other existing COVID-19 funding and the wider recovery and renewal priorities for Wirral.

This matter affects all wards within the Borough; it is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. The Policy & Resources Committee are recommended to note the contents of the report, the progress made to date and to support the ongoing COVID-19 response.
2. The Policy & Resources Committee are recommended to create a Member Working Group be established to consist of eight Members (3;2;1;1;1) to give oversight to future spending proposals for this fund, linked to other existing COVID-19 funding and the wider recovery and renewal priorities for Wirral.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of how Wirral Council will work to Keep Wirral Well and protect residents from the impact of COVID-19.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This report summarises the temporary funding introduced in mid-2020 during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, allocated to Local Authorities for use by Public Health, to respond to and address the impact of the virus – the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).

- 3.2 COMF allocations have been sporadic, with no certainty around future funding until recently. Wirral's COMF allocations are detailed in this report, from the introduction of the funding in June 2020, to the most recent allocation in March 2021.

- 3.3 Public Health are extending and developing further plans for intended continued use of the fund to support ongoing Covid-19 response activities and delivery of Wirral's Local Outbreak Management Plan, as well as supporting the wider local population recovery in the short/medium term.

3.4 Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

- 3.5 The COMF provides funding to local authorities in England, to support public health activities directly related to the COVID-19 response. Wirral has been allocated varying sums, at different stages over the last twelve months as the pandemic has developed and the nature of the situation, both on a national and local level, has changed. The scope of the grant and the funding formula for COMF has evolved with the changing landscape, presenting challenges in forward planning beyond the immediate and very short term.

- 3.6 COMF was subject to review earlier this year, and in March 2021 government confirmed the funding would continue for the financial year 21/22, to enable Local Authorities to plan the continued public health response work, aligned to the national COVID-19 Contain Framework, and continued delivery of Local Outbreak Management Plans.

3.7 Allocation and Current Spend

- 3.8 The total COMF allocation for public health activities for Wirral from June 2020 until March 2022, is £14.784m. The following table provides a breakdown of the allocations as they were confirmed/received, from the initial payment in June 2020,

to the most recent confirmed allocation in March 2021, which is expected to cover the period until March 2022;

Wirral Contain Outbreak Management Fund allocations (received / confirmed June 2020 – March 2021)

Ref	Month Received/Confirmed	Allocation Total
1	Jun-20	£2,733,018
2	Nov-20	£2,701,000
3	Nov-20	£866,126
4	Dec-20	£1,018,320
5	Jan-21	£648,022
6	Mar-21	£1,134,039
7	Mar-21	£1,434,906
8	Mar-21	£1,666,343
9	TBC	£2,582,258
		£14,784,032

3.9 In advance of the March 2021 allocations, Wirral’s forecast COMF spend was £7.347m. This was based on extending existing COVID-19 Hub response and to deliver services until September 2022. These plans were developed, in line with the COMF funding confirmed at that stage (£7.966m) and followed the clarification that residual COMF spend allocated during 2020-21 could be carried forward.

- Resourcing the Covid-19 Hub - £2.772m
 - Outbreak management
 - Enhanced contact tracing
 - Environmental health/health protection
 - Business support
- Community Engagement - £1.948m
- Infection Prevention Control - £854k
- Regional Test and Trace Hub - £618k
- Support for Educational settings - £500k
- Communications - £472k
- Intelligence - £163k

3.10 In March 2021, Wirral received confirmation of a further £6.818m COMF funding, for use during 2021-2022. The residual COMF funding therefore to be allocated over 2021 – 2022 is £7.437m.

3.11 Additional Spend in 2021/22

3.12 It is vital local systems continue to work together to develop and implement plans to respond to COVID-19, and that those plans are sufficiently resourced, financially and with the required expertise. Resource and service planning is underway led by public health, to develop spending plans which support the

ongoing delivery of the proactive containment and intervention measures, as well as the wider considerations linked to Wirral's local population health recovery.

- 3.13 Further use of COMF funding will be linked to resourcing and delivering the priorities of Wirral's Local Outbreak Management Plan, last updated April 2021. The update to the Council's Local Outbreak Management Plan has focused on a revised set of priorities, acknowledging the significant developments across the COVID-19 response system. A summary of key progress against these priority actions outlined within the Local Outbreak Management Plan is provided in the table below;

Priority	Progress to Date and Future Plans
<p>1) Effective Surveillance</p> <p><i>Ensure access to timely local data and intelligence to inform local activity to prevent and manage outbreaks.</i></p>	<p>We have an established local surveillance system to capture timely local outbreak data and provide support to a variety of settings through Wirral's COVID-19 Hub. The Microsoft Dynamics case management platform has led to improvements in the collection and reporting of data captured from local settings, as well as proactive identification of exposures and sources of potential outbreaks. The utilisation of this system has enabled closer collaborative working with the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub and the regional Public Health network.</p> <p>Daily and weekly multi-agency surveillance meetings are held at local and regional levels to understand the epidemiology of current situations and to appropriately direct prevention and control measures, community engagement activity and target communications.</p> <p>We have continued to support the development of the CIPHA (Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action) integrated data and analyst network resource for Cheshire & Merseyside, sustaining a regional understanding of the epidemic and likely demands on health and social care systems.</p>
<p>2) Engagement and Communication</p> <p><i>Build trust and participation through effective community engagement and communication.</i></p>	<p>We have ensured a strong focus on engagement and communication as part of our COVID-19 response, with a clear strategic and insight-driven approach. The 'Keep Wirral Well' branding and core values have been embedded across all communication channels.</p> <p>We have developed a test, trace, isolate, vaccinate communications plan which reinforces key messages to reduce COVID-19 transmission. This is aligned to the national Spring 2021 Road Map.</p> <p>Wirral's Community Champions network has now enlisted over 600 local people, with a case study detailing our local programme presented at the LGA Behavioural Science</p>

	<p>Conference in early 2021 and the successful roll out of the EngagementHQ platform to gather insights from our Champions more effectively. More information on the Community Champion Programme can be found here: Keep Wirral Well during COVID-19 www.wirral.gov.uk</p> <p>We have invested in our local Community Connector service, recruiting an extra 22 Community Connectors, to undertake proactive engagement with communities with lower testing and vaccination uptake.</p> <p>We have recruited nine Black and Minority Ethnic Link Workers, to enhance existing engagement with our ethnic minority communities, with emphasis on maximise participation with Testing and Vaccination take-up.</p>
<p>3) Higher-Risk Settings, Communities and Locations <i>Identify and support high risk workplaces, locations and communities to prevent and manage outbreaks.</i></p>	<p>The COVID-19 Hub continues to work closely with local partners to prevent and manage outbreaks in high-risk settings with a robust daily review process and use of local intelligence to proactively target settings at higher risk of outbreaks.</p> <p>There is a coordinated health and social care response; overseeing capacity, trends, resources and updated guidance, leading the partnership across the system including voluntary sector, to respond to emerging pressures and system needs. We will build on learning to date and work in partnership to ensure our Health and Care system is able to deliver high quality COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 care for Winter 2021, including surge capacity to respond to further surges in COVID-19, the emergence of new COVID-19 variants, and a potential surge in other respiratory viruses.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Hub School Support Team continue to successfully provide dedicated educational support and guidance on national policies and implementation of required measures.</p> <p>We are working with local third sector, voluntary and other organisations and groups to respond to the needs of local communities particularly at risk of COVID-19.</p> <p>Regular meetings are held with representatives from across the local business sector, including the Wirral Chamber of Commerce, to support COVID safe organisational settings as restrictions are relaxed in accordance with the Spring 2021 Roadmap. We have revised and updated the Council's Business Toolkit to ensure employers and employees understand their responsibilities and are supported to maintain safe environments.</p>

<p>4) Supporting vulnerable and underserved communities <i>Proactively support individuals and communities, ensuring services across test, trace, isolate and support systems are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our local communities.</i></p>	<p>We have maintained excellent community links with over 100 local community groups and organisations, through the Humanitarian partnership and regular meetings, working together to support local communities.</p> <p>We have ensured targeted communications in areas of high incidence, to over 35,000 properties, highlighting current guidance and support available as well as maintaining regular contact with our clinically extremely vulnerable residents.</p> <p>We have worked with the local multicultural third sector to support access to regular symptom free testing and will continue to promote access to testing for groups at higher risk of infection owing to range of social, economic, ethnic or geographical factors.</p> <p>We are currently developing cultural awareness training for local NHS staff to ensure they are sensitive to the diverse needs and cultural differences across our local population.</p>
<p>5) Vaccination <i>Support the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, identifying and tackling inequalities in vaccine coverage.</i></p>	<p>In partnership with NHS colleagues, we continue to support the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Wirral. The prioritisation of roll-out has focussed on vaccinating our most vulnerable residents, as agreed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Our first COVID-19 vaccination was administered in Wirral on 8th December 2020, and since then significant progress has been made with the local roll-out. As of 19th May 2021, 72% of the eligible population of Wirral had received the 1st dose of the vaccine, with 45% having received both doses.</p> <p>We have locally prioritised homeless people and rough sleepers for the COVID-19 vaccine and will continue to use local data and intelligence, including a local programme of engagement based on insight, to identify any areas of low uptake within local communities.</p> <p>Citizen’s Advice Bureau’s social prescribing team has carried out targeted work with a small number of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) patients (housebound and/or severely frail) registered as declining their vaccine offer. Using a general wellbeing call the team contacted individuals to understand their COVID-19 vaccine experience and offer a person-centred intervention. To date, 6 CEV individuals have actively accepted the vaccine.</p> <p>We have facilitated a targeted COVID-19 vaccination Q&A session for social care staff giving the opportunity to speak directly to a panel of clinical experts from midwifery,</p>

	<p>pharmacy and General Practice. The session also sought to increase access opportunities (on site and local).</p>
<p>6) Testing <i>Identify cases of COVID-19 by ensuring access to testing for those with and without symptoms and for outbreak management.</i></p>	<p>We have worked with local, regional and national partners to develop an appropriate and flexible local testing offer across symptomatic, asymptomatic and outbreak testing. In December 2020, Wirral was one of the first areas to commence symptom-free Community Testing.</p> <p>Wirral's Testing Strategy was revised in February 2021, aligning to the national plans for Community Testing, maintaining accessible testing for people with symptoms, complemented by mobile testing units and outreach testing and distribution. We have also continued to promote testing within local settings and workplaces, offered alongside training and quality assurance processes.</p> <p>We continue to review our local strategy as national policy changes and testing capacity and capabilities continue to emerge – ensuring that we retain our ability to respond and mobilise surge mass testing as required, for example due to a Variant of Concern, and align to enhanced contact tracing.</p> <p>We will review the outcomes and learn from national pilots related to 'test to release' (daily testing to reduce self-isolation period) and 'test to enable' (e.g. to attend events) approaches to ensure their successful usage locally.</p>
<p>7) Contact Tracing <i>Effectively deploy local contact tracing to reduce the onward transmission of COVID-19.</i></p>	<p>Wirral's local contact tracing service is now directly delivered by the COVID-19 Hub, with a skilled and fully trained dedicated team in place to ensure a sustainable service for the future. This local approach, as well as our participation in the 'Local 0' programme, has subsequently improved case completion rates with intelligence gained confirming that local people with COVID-19 are grateful for the local knowledge and support imparted as a result of this in-house service.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub, Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care Local Tracing Partnership forums, to influence and strengthen the local contact tracing system, enabling us to reach people who the national system has been unable to contact and to prioritise and respond to high-risk complex cases and settings.</p> <p>We have continued to support health and social care, schools, local businesses and other settings through intelligence led contact tracing and where a focused outbreak response is appropriate. Wirral's COVID-19 Hub</p>

	<p>has also commenced formal support of local NHS Trusts, providing assistance where contacts of positive inpatients or recent discharged residents are identified.</p> <p>Going forward, we will look to gain a better understanding of reasons for failure to engage and utilise this insight to shape communications and support, as well as developing adaptable systems and suitable delivery models for focused contact tracing for areas with high transmission, exploring contact tracing via home visits in specific circumstances.</p>
<p>8) Support for Self-Isolation <i>Ensure access to support, including where appropriate financial support, to ensure people who need to self-isolate can do so.</i></p>	<p>We have produced guides on self-isolation for a range of target audience cohorts, which included advice and guidance on accessing the self-isolation payment scheme, wider welfare support and non- financial support available, as well as working with Wirral Chamber and local businesses to support awareness of employer responsibilities in supporting staff to self-isolate when required.</p> <p>We have supported our local contact tracing support to isolate through follow up text messaging and through Community Connectors supporting individuals, with both cases and contacts now proactively contacted by the contact tracing team for welfare checks and practical support throughout their isolation period.</p> <p>We will continue to engage with local communities, to further our understanding of the breadth and extent of the barriers for self-isolation across our population, using this insight to identify any gaps in our local response, both in terms of the financial support available, including the discretionary fund, as well as the non-financial practical and other areas of support.</p> <p>We will also embed the guidance set out in the advisory framework for self-isolation recently issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Test and Trace, when considering local communications, practical support, our support offer and improving outcomes.</p>
<p>9) Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC) <i>Develop robust plans and working with local, regional and national</i></p>	<p>In February 2021, Wirral responded locally to the identification of a Variant of Interest across the North West, working with national and local partners to undertake enhanced contact tracing, access to additional symptomatic testing capacity and effective public communications.</p> <p>We have developed local plans outlining how we would enable surge responses related to enhanced contact tracing, and testing – within a specific geographical area, or</p>

<p><i>partners to enable surge capacity, to respond to local outbreaks and VOC.</i></p>	<p>targeted at specific common exposures for a select time period - including door-to-door testing and face-to-face contact tracing as required.</p> <p>A key part of our response to VOCs will be effective communication and community engagement to ensure local communities understand the purpose of the surge response, why it is targeted and time limited and what they need to do to contain the spread of the virus.</p> <p>We will also continue closely working with Public Health England, the Department of Health and Social Care and North West Local Authority colleagues to ensure we have agreed local processes in place for managing outbreaks linked to a VOC.</p>
<p>10) Compliance, Enforcement and Living with COVID-19 (COVID secure) Work <i>collaboratively to guide, inform and support local compliance with regulations and restrictions, support local enforcement where necessary, and plan for gradual re-opening of wider society.</i></p>	<p>We have an established system in place to ensure effective partnership working and communication between the COVID-19 Hub and local Environmental Health and Enforcement teams, to manage compliance and enforcement across Wirral.</p> <p>Alongside this internal system, we have actively participated in joint working across the Liverpool City Region, through multi-agency co-operation, the Compliance and Regulations Cell and sub-groups, to ensure a consistent approach to supporting local compliance and enforcement measures across Merseyside and to develop effective processes and systems.</p> <p>We have monitored the operations and compliance of local businesses including responding to reports of non-compliance, conducting 1,557 visits to local businesses, across hospitality, close contact services, supermarkets, retail and other premises. As restrictions are relaxed as part of the Spring 2021 Roadmap plans, we will continue to support organisations to operate safely.</p> <p>We will continue to contribute to the strategic design and planning for local recovery, a gradual re-opening of wider society and the local economy, the interface with testing and vaccination programmes, and local plans to manage summer events, providing clear and consistent advice and guidance, and a strong community engagement approach.</p>
<p>11) Governance, accountability, and resourcing <i>Establish robust governance structures for</i></p>	<p>We have adapted the robust emergency response governance system established in March 2020, revising the local COVID-19 governance structure recently to continue to holding organisations to account, taking decisions and agreeing necessary actions to manage and respond effectively to COVID-19.</p>

<p><i>decision making with clear accountability and effective resource use.</i></p>	<p>We will continue to manage and respond effectively to COVID-19 by strengthening existing partnerships at strategic and operational levels across local, regional and national stakeholders.</p> <p>The Wirral COVID-19 Hub will be retained until at least Summer 2022, extending temporary contracts and building resilience in our experienced and established local teams.</p>
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3.14 Emerging themes developed through strategic recovery and renewal planning will also help determine future spending priorities for the COMF;

- Children & Families
- Communities
- Economy
- Inequalities, Health & Wellbeing

3.15 In addition to utilising COMF to extend existing response and COVID-19 Hub activities (summarised in 3.9), there are a number of specific proposals, and emerging priorities to be given further consideration, through COMF.

3.16 Delivery of community testing

3.17 Ringfenced funding for Community Testing is confirmed until end of June 2021. The Chief Medical Officer has expressed there is a continued role for local authorities with testing, and the importance of testing and the role of local authorities is also set out in the Spring 2021 Roadmap. If no further dedicated funding is allocated for community testing to local councils, it is proposed to utilise COMF to continue with the local testing offer, to deliver local symptom-free testing and testing in the event of outbreaks in Wirral, until at least March 2022.

3.18 Support to self-isolate

3.19 Practical support for self-isolation – Supporting people who need to self-isolate remains a key priority in the response to COVID-19, helping halt the spread of the virus. In addition to the direct financial support available, local authorities have received ring-fenced funding to support people self-isolating with any practical needs until June 2021. It is unclear whether any further funding will be made available to extend this support beyond June 2021. We are monitoring the impact and outcomes of a proactive approach and will use local intelligence to consider innovative practice, through use of COMF funding, to support residents that need to self-isolate.

3.20 Sustaining and strengthening resilient communities.

3.21 Recovery for Communities Fund - Communities have played a unique role in responding to local needs over the last year. Development of an outcome focused grant funding for local community groups, providing the opportunity for one-off funding to support local communities with addressing direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 within the borough.

- 3.22 Support for Mental Health – Funding to address the identified needs of local people and communities in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, including isolation, loneliness, anxiety, depression, bereavement, ill health, and loss of income.
- 3.23 Build on joined-up working from public services and community/voluntary group - Ensure our residents remain supported after Covid-19.
- 3.24 **Behavioural insight to support better outcomes**
- 3.25 Resourcing a system and infrastructure for generating qualitative insights and applying scientific analysis to inform policy, improve public services, and deliver positive results for people and communities in Wirral.
- 3.26 **Information and advice**
- 3.27 Funding the extension of an existing commission for information and advice services in relation to fuel poverty, supporting our most vulnerable residents with advice, support and signposting. A longer-term approach to effective Borough wide information, advice and support will be delivered through the Change Programme aligned to the Wirral Plan.
- 3.28 **Supporting children, young people and families.**
- 3.29 Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 for children, young people and families, with plans focussed around five emerging thematic areas:
- Support for 'hidden harms'
 - Digital Exclusion/Poverty
 - Mental Health
 - Education & Aspiration
 - Support to low-income families
- 3.30 A programme of work will facilitate and enable the renewal of Wirral from the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the impacts at community and Borough wide level, and the opportunities to reimagine and rebuild a better future for the Borough, its places, and communities. To oversee the distribution of recovery funding – aligned to an agreed renewal programme it is proposed that a sub-group of P&R is created to ensure political oversight of programme activity and performance.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Wirral Council has received a total of £14,784,032 from the Test and Trace Contain Outbreak Management Fund that covers the period July 2020 to March 2022. The table below details where resource has been allocated to:

Area	Planned spend to end of September 22
Hub operations	£2,772,471
Community Engagement	£1,968,259
Infection Prevention Control service	£853,549
C&M- Regional Test and Trace Hub	£618,021
Supporting Educational Settings	£500,000
Communications	£471,812
Intelligence	£162,975
To be allocated	£7,436,945
Total	£14,784,032

4.2 Within the £14,784,032 total, there is £7,436,945 that is presently being reviewed to determine how it can be effectively allocated. To note £6,817,546 of the £14,784,032 funding was received after February 2021. Resource and service planning is underway led by public health, to develop spending plans which will be reported at a future meeting.

4.3 We are currently undertaking a review of the commitments within the Tranche funding as some of the expenditure allocated to the Tranche funding meets the criteria for COMF and had been included within that forecast before the additional COMF was provided. Therefore, there is a rationale to transfer eligible commitments from the Tranche funding to the COMF, thereby releasing Tranche funding to reduce the value of exceptional financial support. This is currently being investigated and will be reported at a future meeting.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5.2 A duty for the management of communicable diseases that present a risk to the health of the public requiring urgent investigation and management by the Council, in conjunction with Public Health England, sit with:

1. The Director of Public Health under the National Health Service Act 2006;

and

2. The Chief Environmental Health Officer under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984

5.3 The Director of Public Health has primary responsibility for the health of the local community. This includes being assured that the arrangements to protect the health of the communities that they serve are robust and are implemented through developing and deploying local outbreak management plans. Each authority must make available the necessary resources to investigate and control any outbreak at the request of the Outbreak Control Team. The Council's Local Outbreak

Management Plan has been developed in accordance with the Authority's statutory duties and Public Health England guidance.

- 5.4 The existing powers afforded to Environmental Health Officers and others have been bolstered by new additional powers to support enforcement of Covid specific restrictions and control which have been reviewed and appropriately utilised locally.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 This report is for information to Members and as a result there are no resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 It should be noted that data relating to case rates, hospitalisation and operational management of the COVID-19 response is frequently changing and as a result, some of the information contained within this report is likely to be outdated by the time of publication.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 No direct public consultation or engagement has been undertaken in relation to this report. However, community engagement is a key priority in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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. Equality considerations were a key component of the actions noted in this report, however there are no further direct equality implications arising.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct environment and climate implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Local Outbreak Management Plan 2021: [Wirral Local Outbreak Management Plan - April 2021](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	13th October 2020
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	19th November 2020
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	18th January 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	2nd March 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	7th June 2021



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

REPORT TITLE:	2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING AND 22/23 BUDGET PROCESS
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

REPORT SUMMARY

On 17 March 2021, the Committee approved the process for monitoring the 2021/22 budget and for commencing the budget setting process for 2022/23. This report highlights these processes and includes further supporting information to ensure they can be followed.

The Committee is aware that the Ministry for Housing, Local Government and Communities have provided a conditional offer of exceptional financial support (capitalisation directive) for 2021/22 of up to £10.7m. One of the conditions of that offer is that the Council will need to provide evidence from the assurance review of the authority’s financial position and its ability to meet any or all of the identified budget gap without any additional borrowing.

Therefore, it is vitally important that the Council has robust processes in place to manage and monitor the in-year financial position, to ensure it is reporting a forecast balanced position to the end of the year and that the process for 22/23 budget setting is underway early so that a budget can be agreed by Full Council in March.

2021/22 Budget Monitoring

The report updates on the position for the 2021/22 budget and the role of the Committees in monitoring the budget during the year. This enables Committees to take ownership of their specific budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets. Supporting information is provided to the Committee in order for this to happen as part of the appendices. The Committee is accountable for ensuring that the committee budget remains within the relevant envelope and will take collective responsibility via the Policy and Resources Committee to ensure that the whole Council budget remains in balance at all times, by agreeing mitigating actions to bring the budget back in line, should a deficit be forecast.

To enable committees to manage and monitor budgets effectively in year, a suite of detailed information will be provided on a quarterly basis:

- Full revenue budget monitoring report for the preceding quarter
- Full list of budget savings proposals and the progress for their achievement
- Full list of reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments
- Full capital budget monitoring report for the preceding quarter

- Other specific information relevant to the individual committee

In addition, committees who have requested it, will be provided with an exception report on a monthly basis, outside of the quarterly monitoring process. This will be a summary report that will highlight any known significant changes from the previous quarterly forecast that require the committee's attention.

2022/23 Budget Process

Members will note that one of the key documents required to enable the Council to receive approval for exceptional financial support was a balanced five-year medium term financial plan (MTFP). A summary of this was provided in the budget report to the Committee on 17 March 2021. This document was prepared by Officers and now requires committee oversight and approval. The Committees will consider whether the proposals included in the MTFP for the 2022/23 budget, and beyond, are to be taken forward or whether they are to be replaced by alternative proposals that the committee recommend.

Officers have prepared a suite of documents included within the appendices to support the Committee in its role of contributing to the budget setting process.

Each committee, supported by the Officers, is accountable for identifying, developing and agreeing savings proposals during the summer to ensure a draft balanced budget can be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in October 2021, to enable budget consultation to start in a timely manner in November 2021.

To enable the Officer budget proposals to be scrutinised by the Committee, it is recommended that a budget working group be established to consider the content of the MTFP and make recommendations into the committee on the viability of the proposals, the robustness of the pressures/growth items and to recommend any additional proposals that the Committee require officers to prepare.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough and is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee note the content of the report and the current forecast position of savings for 2021/22 and the ongoing work being undertaken to mitigate any under-achievement to mitigate the National Employers pay award offer in paragraph 3.14.
2. The Committee note that it may be possible to reduce the value of exceptional financial support in 2021/22 as a result of utilising some of the Contain Outbreak Management Funding for expenditure currently committed against the Tranche funding, but that this will be monitored during the year and an update provided to the Committee at the quarterly reporting.
3. The Committee convene a series of budget workshops to identify any alternative savings/income/reductions in pressures to ensure that the agreed budget savings for 2021/22 can be made as highlighted in paragraph 3.10.
4. The Committee agree for Officers to work on the current proposals within this report at paragraph 3.25 for 2022/23 budget and task Officers with developing them into full

business cases, where appropriate, for inclusion in the 2022/23 budget proposals to Policy and Resources Committee at its October meeting for approval.

5. The Committee convene a series of budget workshops to identify any alternative savings/income/reductions in pressures for 2022/23 to ensure that a full suite of costed and deliverable proposals can be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee at its October meeting for approval.
6. The Committee commence the Zero Based Budgeting project within the budget workshops, as highlighted in paragraph 3.19 to contribute to the overall savings target of £170k in 2021/22.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The 2021/22 Budget was agreed at Full Council on 1 March 2021. This budget was made up of savings proposals, pressures/growth items and funding that were based on either actual known figures or best estimates available at the time. At any point during the year, these estimated figures could change and need to be monitored closely to ensure, if adverse, mitigating actions can be taken immediately to ensure a balanced forecast budget can be reported to the end of the year.
- 1.2 The 2022/23 budget is required to be agreed by full Council no later than 11 March each year. Members should be engaged as early as possible in this process to have time to consider and recommend proposals to be able to present a balanced budget to full Council and to allow sufficient time for a meaningful public consultation exercise.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Committee could choose to not engage in the budget monitoring process for 2021/22 which could result in an overspend position for 2021/22 being reported.
- 2.2 The Committee could choose to not engage in the budget setting process for 2022/23 which could result in the inability to recommend a balanced budget to full Council in March 2022.
- 2.3 Both of these options would result in an unbalanced budget which is unlawful. Under these circumstances, the Section 151 Officer would be required to issue a section 114 notice and report this to all Members of Full Council. The outcome of which would result in intervention by Government.
- 2.4 The Committee can decide to establish their own process for monitoring the 2021/22 in-year budget and setting the 2022/23 budget. This would need to be agreed at the 29 June Policy and Resources Committee which reduces the time available to implement mitigating actions, where an adverse 2021/22 forecast maybe found.
- 2.5 This also reduces the time available for the identification and agreement of proposals to be included in the 2022/23 budget. Either of these delays could put the ability to present a balanced 21/22 and 22/23 budget at risk and increase the risk.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At its Committee in March, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed the process for managing and monitoring the 2021/22 budget. This process is as follows:

2021/22 Budget Monitoring

3.2 Committees will be accountable for ensuring that the budget remains within the relevant envelope for each committee and will take collective responsibility via the Policy and Resources Committee to ensure that the whole Council budget remains in balance at all times or provides mitigating actions to bring the budget back in line, should a year-end deficit be forecast. This is more prevalent this year due to the conditions attached to the Exceptional Financial Support (Appendix 4)

3.3 To enable committees to manage and monitor budgets effectively in-year, a suite of detailed information will be provided on a quarterly basis in line with the normal budget reporting timetable.

- Full revenue budget monitoring report for the preceding quarter (available following the end of Quarter 1)
- Full list of budget savings proposals and the progress for their achievement (Appendix 1)
- Full list of reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments (Appendix 2)
- Full capital budget monitoring report for the preceding quarter (available following the end of Quarter 1)
- Other specific information relevant to the individual committee

In addition, a summary budget book will be included for the first budget workshop.

3.4 Committees had previously requested a budget book that detailed the individual budgets for each committee. The full budget books are extremely detailed and could contain hundreds of separate lines and would be more conducive to a workshop where these can be scrutinised and discussed in detail. It is recommended that a budget working group is established by the Committee, convened immediately, that would meet throughout the summer to:

- Oversee the monitoring of the 2021/22 in-year budget
- Review the detailed budgets for the committee
- Undertake the Zero Based Budgeting exercise (paragraph 3.15)
- Identify proposals/scrutinise pressures to be included for the 2022/23 budget (paragraph 3.23)

3.5 Committees have the autonomy to transfer budgets (virements) from one function to another, where appropriate and within the realm of policy objectives, within their overall committee budget envelope. Recommendations for budget virements will be subject to advice of statutory officers which would include Legal, Finance and other Statutory Directors where appropriate.

3.6 Each committee will be responsible for remaining within its overall budget envelope and not overspending. Where an adverse variance is forecast, each committee will be required to take remedial action to bring the budget back in line and ensure that overspends are mitigated.

- 3.7 Where a committee has taken all possible steps for remedial action and is unable to mitigate an overspend, this must be reported to the P&R Committee who will take an organisational view of how this adverse variance will be managed. There must be immediate action agreed to ensure a forecast balanced budget can be reported, and this will be monitored by the P&R Committee. In the case of variances within the P&R Committee, the Committee will be required to determine how this will be managed.
- 3.8 Whilst each committee is required to remain within its annual budget envelope, there may be reasons for committees to report a favourable variance in-year. Committees wishing to use any forecast underspend must have approval from the P&R Committee to do this. The council cannot be in a situation where one committee is forecasting an overspend that it is unable to mitigate, and another committee is forecasting an underspend and utilises this for its own purposes.
- 3.9 The P&R Committee has overall responsibility for taking any necessary steps required to ensure that the Council can report a balanced budget throughout the year.

2021/22 Interim Budget Forecast

- 3.10 Appendix 1 provides the list of savings that were agreed by Full Council on 1 March relevant to this Committee. Of the total saving agreed £0.53m is currently at risk of non-achievement. This comprises 3 areas:
- Review of Traded Services
 - PFI support from Department for Environment (DfE)
 - Buildings remaining closed temporarily due to Covid-19
- 3.11 The review of traded services is ongoing with a working group established in March to review all the Council traded services. This is a two-year saving. Following the 2021/22 buyback exercise for Council services, the Schools IT service saw a large drop in buyback and as a result will be forecasting an underachievement of income if the service is unable to find mitigating savings. The working group are progressing with the review and the first phase of the project will be reported as part of Quarter 1 monitoring.
- 3.12 It was originally anticipated to ask the DfE for additional support for the PFI payments for Kingsway school. However, following a letter from DfE regarding previous support, it is unlikely to be forthcoming with further support. A review is being undertaken of the building with potential options being considered which may result in the mitigation of the non-achievement of this saving.
- 3.13 As a result of the temporary closure of some Council buildings due to the pandemic, savings were forecast on those buildings with an option to be disposed of, ready for the move to Birkenhead Commercial District (BCD). It was anticipated that some of those buildings could remain closed until the move took place, thereby releasing temporary savings. However, one building is now required for the Home Education Service (Pensby Park) and due to capacity issues, work on some buildings that were planned to be disposed of early, have been delayed. It may be possible for other

buildings, not part of the BCD option that have been closed temporarily in the first part of 2021/22, to provide offsetting savings.

- 3.14 Notification has recently been received from North West Employers that the National Association of Employers had made an offer to the Trade Unions for a 1.5% pay rise for public sector pay in 2021/22. This is contradiction to the announcement made as part of the Chancellor's autumn statement that there would be a pause to increases in public sector pay in 2021/22 with the exception of employees paid £24k and under, who would receive a one-off £250 increase.
- 3.15 The Council had made provision in the 2021/22 budget of £0.36m for employees paid £24k and under. If the Employers pay offer is accepted at 1.5% for 2021/22, this would result in an additional £1.34m pressure. This would be the minimum value of pressure if any increase on 1.5% was agreed. This is currently unfunded and will need actions to be taken in year to mitigate it to ensure a balanced budget can be reported at the end of the year.
- 3.16 During the past few months, further clarity has been received on the amount of funding allocated to the Council for the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). During the period July 2020 to March 2022 the Council has so far been allocated £14.8m, of which £7.4m is currently uncommitted.
- 3.17 Within Covid-19 Tranche funding is a commitment for expenditure relating to Covid-19 recovery that the Council originally assumed would be funded from the Tranche funding, in the absence of any other funds. This expenditure is eligible under the COMF criteria and should be funded from COMF. Therefore, it is recommended to transfer the commitments from the Tranche funding to COMF, thereby potentially releasing the commitment from the Tranche funding.
- 3.18 The impact of this would be to reduce the value of the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) for 2021/22. Members will remember that EFS is only allowable for Covid-19 expenditure pressures, therefore reducing Covid-19 pressures from the Tranche funding will reduce the EFS. At this stage, this is a proposal, as the longer-term impact of Covid-19 is unknown and in the event of other expenditure materialising throughout the year there may not be the scope in the COMF to transfer this expenditure and reduce the value of EFS. The value of the eligible commitments will initially need to be reviewed and this will be monitored as part of the normal budget monitoring process and reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis.

Zero Based Budgeting

- 3.19 As part of the 2021/22 budget, a savings proposal of £170k to carry out a zero based budgeting exercise was agreed. Zero basing is a method of budgeting in which all expenditure must be justified before it is agreed. The process starts from a 'zero base' i.e. a zero budget and every function within the area is analysed for its needs and costs. Budgets are then built around what is needed for the following period, regardless of whether each budget is higher or lower than the previous one.
- 3.20 The process can be time-consuming and is usually undertaken in advance of the following year's budget setting. The proposal for £170k saving recognises that this is

a part-year saving and should provide an indication of further savings that could be achieved in 2022/23.

- 3.21 In order for this saving to be achieved in-year, it is recommended that Members of the budget workshops, supported by Officers, start the zero basing in July. Officers will shortly be undertaking a 'spring-clean' of budgets to ensure that the current activity is correctly reflected in the budgets in order for the zero-basing to be undertaken effectively.

2022/23 Budget Setting

- 3.22 The process for setting the 2022/23 budget will commence immediately. Officers, to satisfy the requirement of MHCLG for exceptional financial support, have compiled a five-year medium term financial plan (MTFP). Committees will consider whether the proposals included in the MTFP for the 2022/23 budget, and beyond, are to be taken forward or whether they are to be replaced by alternative proposals that the committees recommend.
- 3.23 The budget gap for the Council for 2022/23 currently stands at £19.5m. At the Policy and Resources Committee on 17 March, a full list of officer proposals were included in the budget report that balanced this gap. Since then, as officers have been reviewing these proposals, some of these values are currently at risk and there now remains a forecast unmitigated budget gap, of around £5m. As part of good financial management and sustainability, it is prudent for a suite of budget options to be considered for the forthcoming annual budget that exceed the budget gap, not for specific individual proposals to be included that exactly match the gap, as this effectively provides no scope for any consultation feedback to be taken into account.
- 3.24 In readiness for the first committees of the new municipal year, Officers have prepared a suite of documents for the committees. These are:
- List of future years savings and pressures included within the MTFP (Appendix 3)
 - Summary business cases for each of the savings proposals in the MTFP for 2022/23 and whether any specific consultation is required for each one (to be included at the budget workshops)
 - Summary business cases for each of the perceived pressures/growth items in the MTFP with supporting evidence as to how they have been estimated (to be included as part of the budget workshops)
 - Oversight of all savings proposals and growth/pressures over the medium term for Members to ensure no duplication or contradiction across Committees (to be included as part of the budget workshops)
- 3.25 Included within the MTFP for 2022/23 are a suite of proposals for the Committees' consideration as part of next year's budget process. These are included within Appendix 3 and the majority of them span multi-years. If the Committee recommends for Officers to work these proposals up into Business cases, these will be shared with the Committee at the budget workshops.
- 3.26 Each committee, via the budget working groups, will be accountable for identifying, developing and agreeing savings proposals during the summer to meet the 2022/23 budget gap and ensure a draft balanced budget can be considered by the P&R

Committee in October 2021, to enable budget consultation to start in a timely manner in November 2021. These can be the Officer proposals included within Appendix 3 or new proposals identified by the Committee, or a mix of both.

- 3.27 It is recommended that the budget workshops not only identify additional savings proposals to meet the gap but to scrutinise and challenge the pressures and growth items included in the MTFP for 2022/23 to see if these can be reduced.

Exceptional Financial Support

- 3.28 Members will be aware that in March, MHCLG provided a conditional offer of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to the Council of up to £10.7m to support the indirect pressures forecast as an ongoing impact of Covid-19 in the 2022/23 budget. One of the conditions of that offer was that an external assurance review would be commissioned by MHCLG.
- 3.29 In preparedness for this review, the Council has been working with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to carry out an interim assessment of MTFP and a high-level review of the cost of the services the Council provides. Further information regarding EFS can be found at Appendix 4.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report describes the process for 2021/22 budget monitoring and 2022/23 budget setting. Included within it are the current financial forecasts for both years. Therefore, all the financial implications are included within the body of the report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The role of the Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, has been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council.
- 5.2 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. 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.
- 5.3 Section 30(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the Council has to set its budget before 11th March in the financial year preceding the one in respect of which the budget is set.
- 5.4 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.

- 5.5 Consultation must take place in accordance with the Council's duties under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The detailed summary of responses provided are attached in the appendix to this report. 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. The consultation process, including the Council's consideration of the responses, is required to comply with the following overarching obligations (unless detailed statutory rules supplant these):
- (a) Consultation must be at a time when proposals are at a formative stage.
 - (b) The proposer must give sufficient reasons for its proposals to allow consultees to understand them and respond to them properly.
 - (c) Consulters must give sufficient time for responses to be made and considered.
 - (d) Responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision. This is the same whether or not a public body was required to consult or chooses to do so. This is because all of those rules are aspects of an overriding requirement for 'fairness'. The process must be substantively fair and have the appearance of fairness. The setting of the budget and council tax by Members involves their consideration of choices.
- 5.6 When considering options, Members must bear in mind their fiduciary duty to the council taxpayers of Wirral. Members must have adequate evidence on which to base their decisions on the level of quality at which services should be provided.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 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. 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.
- 5.9 There is a particular requirement to take into consideration the Council's fiduciary duty and the public sector equality duty in coming to its decision.
- 5.10 The public sector equality duty is that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (2) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- 5.11 Any decision made in the exercise of any function is potentially open to challenge if the duty has been disregarded. The duty applies both to Full Council when setting the budget and to the Policy and Services Committees when considering decisions.

- 5.12 Once a budget is in place, Council has delegated responsibility to the Policy and Services Committees to implement it. The Committees may not act contrary to the Budget without consent of Council other than in accordance with the Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of the Constitution.
- 5.13 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, 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, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.
- 5.14 Members are also individually reminded that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to this meeting. 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 At this time, there are no additional resource implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there will be resource implications, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget for 2021/22 is dependent on a static financial position. This is an impossible scenario due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the 2021/22 budget, albeit the best estimates that were 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 2021/22 budget must be agreed and in place as soon as possible. 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 The risk of this not being able to be achieved could mean that the Council does not have enough funding to offset its expenditure commitments for the year and therefore not be able report a balanced budget at the end of the year. This could result in the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice.
- 7.4 The budget agreed by full Council on 1 March 2021 for 2021/22 was underpinned by an offer of a maximum of £10.7m exceptional financial support provided by MHCLG. This offer was conditional and is described in paragraph 3.21. If the Council does not accept recommendations made from the external assurance review, this may put the offer of the exceptional financial support at risk. If the Council is not able to report a

balanced budget without some or all of the exceptional financial support, this may also result in the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice in year.

- 7.5 A key risk to the Council's financial plans is that funding and demand assumptions in particular can change as more information becomes available. As such, the MTFP is regularly reviewed and updated as part of routine financial management.
- 7.6 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.
- 7.7 The MTFP currently presents a balanced budget over a five-year period. If the committees are not minded to accept the proposals included by Officers in the MTFP, especially for the 2022/23 budget, alternative proposals need to be identified and agreed as soon as possible. A delay in agreeing these may put the timetable for setting the 2022/23 at risk and may result in a balanced budget not being identified in time for the deadline of 11 March 2022.
- 7.8 The five-year MTFP is based on current estimated information available. A four-year comprehensive spending review (CSR) is anticipated from Government from 2022/23. Assumptions have been made in the current MTFP 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 CSR, additional savings proposals or reduced expenditure would need to be identified as soon as possible to ensure a balanced five-year MTFP can be achieved. Committees will be kept updated with any announcements regarding the CSR through the year.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in arriving at the governance process for the 2021/22 budget monitoring process and the 2022/23 budget setting process. SLT have compiled the MTFP.
- 8.2 Since the budget was agreed at Full Council on 1 March, some proposals may have been the subject of further consultation with Members, Customer and Residents. The details of these are included within the individual business cases or are the subject of separate reports to the Committee.

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 At this time, there are no further equality implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is

unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be equality implications associated with these, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 At this time, there are no additional environmental and climate implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be environment and climate implications associated with these that will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Achievement of 2021/22 approved savings
Appendix 2 Committee Reserves
Appendix 3 Future years savings proposals and Growth/Pressures
Appendix 4 Exceptional Financial Support

BACKGROUND PAPERS

MHCLG Exceptional Financial Support Offer Letter

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	17 March 2021
Full Council	1 March 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	7 October 2020

APPENDIX 1

Progress on the achievement of approved 2021/22 Budget Savings

Saving Title	Agreed Value	Forecast Value	RAG Rating	Comments
Business Change budget reduction	£0.67m	£0.67m	Green	On target to be achieved
Review of Traded Services	£0.27m	£0.27m	Amber	A reduction in the buyback of Schools IT Service may put this saving in jeopardy. The working group is currently reviewing options
Alternative funding for PFI	£0.25m	£0.00m	Red	It is anticipated that DfE will not be forthcoming with any additional support for the PFI costs for Kingsway school, however a review of the use of the building has commenced.
Bad debt write-off provision	£1.00m	£1.00m	Green	On target to be achieved
New staffing structure in IT and Digital	£0.62m	£0.62m	Green	The saving will be achieved but not fully by the original means. The Digital Strategy requires posts to be kept in the service for the next 12 months so the saving will be achieved by charging some staff to the capital programme and other projects.
Business Support Unit staffing reduction	£0.24m	£0.24m	Green	The saving will be achieved but not necessarily with a full reduction of staff but with a reduction of posts, some of which are vacant.
Wide area network savings	£0.24m	£0.24m	Green	On target to be achieved
Restructure of Revenues and Benefits	£0.15m	£0.15m	Green	On target to be achieved
Centralised Printing	£0.16m	£0.16m	Green	On target to be achieved
Suspension of a proportion of individual Ward Member Budgets	£0.18m	£0.18m	Green	On target to be achieved
Workforce remodelling	£0.39m	£0.39m	Green	On target to be achieved
Continuation of Agile Working	£0.50m	£0.50m	Green	On target to be achieved
Apprenticeships First	£0.15m	£0.15m	Green	On target to be achieved

Strategy				
One Stop Shop Service	£0.10m	£0.10m	Green	On target to be achieved
Continue temporary building closure due to Covid-19	£0.75m	£0.47m	Amber	Due to capacity and the requirement for one building to reopen for the Home Education Service, it maybe that the saving will not be made. However there could be potential for savings to be made in other building that are partially open, not included in the original list to make saving.
Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB)	£0.17m	£0.17m	Green	The ZBB review has yet to commence and is recommended to start in June/July with committee workshops and it is anticipated that the full saving can be made
Contracts and Commissioning	£0.35m	£0.35m	Green	On target to be achieved
Local Welfare Assistance temporary saving	£0.20m	£0.20m	Green	On target to be achieved
Use of Brexit reserve	£0.10m	£0.10m	Green	On target to be achieved
TOTAL	£6.49M	£5.96M		

APPENDIX 2

Reserves relating to the Policy and Resources Committee	£
Commercial Management	225,256
Discretionary Housing Payments	185,185
HR/OD Talent Management	49,801
HR Reserve for Schools	41,279
Transformation Challenge Award	3,667
Asset Consolidation Staff Relocation Contingency	110,450
ICT Records Management	288,400
Licencing Reserve	60,000
Taxi, Marriage and Scrap Metal Licences	102,748
Wirral South Constituency Committee 2020/21 carry forward	2,681
Birkenhead Constituency Committee 2020/21 carry forward	7,207
Wallasey Constituency Committee 2020/21 carry forward	2,913
West Wirral Constituency Committee 2020/21 carry forward	2,388
Business Rates Equalisation (100% rates retention pilot)	4,664,229
Enterprise Zone Investment	481,615
Enterprise Zone Contingency Fund	29,397
Financial Resilience Reserve	2,692,646
Financial Instrument Equalisation Reserve	2,126,270
Year 2 EVR/VS termination payment commitments	1,000,000
DDA – Disabled Access	82,558
Europa Centre dilapidations	83,333
Emergency maintenance work and Work in Default	71,180
ACSR – Asset Management	45,200
Total Policy and Resources Committee Reserves	12,358,403

APPENDIX 3

Future years budget saving proposals and Pressures/Growth Items

Savings Proposals	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Business Change Service Reduction				0.30
Year 2 – Review of Traded Services	0.15			
Reductions in bed debt provision	0.75	0.20		
Year 2 – Review of Revenues and Benefits	0.60			
Commercial Income	0.23	0.23	0.40	0.80
Treasury Investment Income	1.00			
Network Integration	0.16			
Coroners Efficiencies	0.05			
Organisational Transport Review	1.00			
Capitalisation of Legal Salaries	0.20			
Workforce Remodelling	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
Apprenticeships First Strategy	0.12	0.10		
One Stop Shop Efficiencies	0.10	0.21		
Buildings efficiencies	0.16	0.50		
Centralisation of functions	0.30	0.50	0.28	0.18
SmartBusiness	0.40	0.80	1.20	
Contracts and Commissioning	2.00	2.50	2.50	2.65
Lean Processes	0.60	0.45		
Total	9.07	6.74	5.63	5.18
Pressures/Growth Items				
Pay and Pensions increases	2.93	3.01	3.09	3.18
McCloud Pensions increase		1.10		
Market Risk		1.00		
PSSIF non-statutory override	1.00			
Capital Financing	1.64	0.09	0.75	
Total	5.57	5.20	3.84	3.18
Net Savings	3.50	1.54	1.79	2.00

Exceptional Financial Support

In March, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) made an offer of £10.7m to the Council for exceptional financial support, sometimes called a capitalisation direction of capitalisation directive. This means that MHCLG approved the Council, in principle, to borrow £10.7m of funds to help ensure a balanced budget could be agreed by Full Council on 1 March. Borrowing to fund revenue (day to day) expenditure is not normally allowed under law, but on this occasion, a special case was put to HM Treasury and approved.

The Council had not been able to identify sufficient savings to balance the budget in 2021/22 due to additional financial pressures present as a result the outcome of Covid-19. Such pressures include Adults and Childrens Social Care increases, SEN transport increases and Homelessness increases. Ordinarily, a Council would use its reserves and balances to help balance its budget in times of crisis and would not have to apply for exceptional financial support, however the Council does not have the level of reserves and balances to be able to do this.

The borrowing has to be paid back over a 20 year timeframe and costs the Council an additional 1% in interest over and above what it would it normally expect to pay, so it is prudent for the Council to identify any further proposals to reduce the level of exceptional financial support that it requires, so that the interest payments can also reduce.

The offer of exceptional finance support from MHCLG came with conditions which included an external assurance review that would review the authority's financial position and its ability to meet any or all of the identified budget gap without any additional borrowing. Therefore, as part of the external assurance review, MHCLG will be looking for areas that the Council can reduce it's expenditure so that it may not have to provide all or any of the exceptional financial support offered.

This means that a further £10.7m proposals could be recommended to be implemented in year. If the Council fails to comply with MHCLG recommendations, the exceptional financial support offer may be withdrawn and a balanced budget could not be forecast to the end of the year.

In this circumstance, the Section 151 Officer would have to issue a Section 114 notice which states that the Councils' expenditure exceeds its funding and this would be reported to Full Council. The outcome of this would result in Government intervention and Commissioners appointed to manage the financial affairs of the Council. During the period of issuing a Section 114 notice, only statutory and contracted expenditure is allowed to take place, all other expenditure must stop.

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**Wednesday, 9 June 2021**

REPORT TITLE:	WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Policy and Resources 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 Policy and Resources Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Policy & Resources Committee are invited to comment on and note the proposed Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Policy and Resources committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Various formats for the workplan were explored. The current format is 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:

- (i) The Council Plan
- (ii) The Council's transformation programme
- (iii) The Council's Forward Plan
- (iv) Service performance information
- (v) Risk management information
- (vi) Public or service user feedback
- (vii) Referrals from Council

Terms of Reference

The Policy and Resources Committee has two main areas of responsibility, which is to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, including making decisions on policies and co-ordinating spend not reserved to full Council, and to maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets.

The Committee is charged by full Council to:

- (a) formulate, co-ordinate and implement corporate policies and strategies and the medium-term financial plan (budget), which includes responsibility for any decision:
 - (i) that relates to such matters to the extent that they are not reserved to full Council;
 - (ii) on any cross-cutting policies that impact on other committee areas;
 - (iii) on policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other committee; and
 - (iv) to determine any dispute or difference between committees;
- (b) provide a co-ordinating role across all other service committees and retain a 'whole-council' view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management, which includes responsibility for a decision:
 - (i) that has a major impact on a number of Council services or on the Council as a whole;

- (ii) on any virement between Budget funds (revenue) requested by a Committee or officer in excess of **£100,000**;
 - (iii) on any virement between Budget funds (capital) or any amendment to the Capital Programme requested by a Committee or officer in excess of **£100,000**;
 - (iv) regarding land and property including major acquisition and disposals, which includes reserved decision making concerning any purchase, sale or transfer of a value in excess of, or likely to exceed, **£100,000**;
 - (v) regarding companies or limited liability partnerships including acquisition and disposals; and
 - (vi) which is deemed significant in terms of impact on the Council's revenue or capital (to be determined by the Head of Paid Service and/or Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader);
- (c) without limiting the generality of responsibility for cross-cutting policies (at (a) above), lead on behalf of the Council:
- (i) in matters concerning relationships with HM Government, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and other major public and non-public bodies;
- (d) appoint Council representatives as required;
- (e) nominate councillors and other persons to outside bodies; and
- (f) undertake responsibility for developing and monitoring the enabling corporate services, including, finance and investment, project support and risk management, strategic procurement and commercial strategies, ICT, property and asset management, human resources and organisational development, law and governance, communications and public affairs, emergency planning and business continuity.

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.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Steve Fox, Head of Democratic and Member Services**
telephone: 0151 691 8145
email: stevefox@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Policy and Resources Committee Work Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Council Plan
The Council's transformation programme
The Council's Forward Plan

Subject History (last three years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	7 October 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	11 November 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	21 December 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	20 January 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	17 February 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	17 March 2021

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

09 June 2021

Contact Officer/s: Andrew Mossop / Bryn Griffiths

Tel: 0151 691 8501 / 0151 691 8117

e-mail: andrewmossop@wirral.gov.uk / bryngriffiths@wirral.gov.uk

Website: www.wirral.gov.uk

PROPOSED AGENDA FOR POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 09 June 2021

Item	Key Decision Yes/No	Lead Departmental Officer	Wirral Plan Priority
Community Wealth Building	No	Director of Children, Family and Education, Simone White	Inclusive Economy
Use of Council Buildings	No	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood	Sustainable Environment
Appointment of Sub-Committee Members	No	Director of Law and Governance, Phil McCourt	All
Contain Outbreak Management Fund Update	No	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood	Active & Healthy Lives
2021/22 Budget Monitoring and 22/23 Budget Process	No	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood	Inclusive Economy
Referred by Council (22.03.2021): Support for British Values Locally	No	N/A	Safe & Pleasant Communities
Referred by Council (22.03.2021):	No	N/A	Inclusive Economy

Community Investment Bonds			
Referred by Council (22.03.2021): Refugees and Asylum Seekers	No	N/A	Safe & Pleasant Communities

Deadline for SLT	Deadline for Cleared Reports	Agenda Published
14 May 2021	24 May 2021	1 June 2021

UPCOMING KEY DECISIONS

Item	Brief Description	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Liverpool City Region Enabling Powers and Associated Issues Key	Various matters which may require the consent of this Authority as one of the constituent authorities of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Law and Governance, Phil McCourt
Strategic Asset Acquisitions Key	Approval to acquire key assets as part of the Council's growth strategy	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Regeneration and Place, Alan Evans
Liscard Neighbourhood Framework / Integrated Masterplan Key	Approval of the Neighbourhood Framework / Integrated Masterplan for Liscard Town and confirmation of next steps	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Regeneration and Place, Alan Evans
Wirral Local Plan: 'Local Green Space - Assessment of Applications for Designations' Key	TBC	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Regeneration and Place, Alan Evans

Budget 2021/22, Medium Term Financial Plan and Covid Monitoring 2020/21 Key	This report will provide an update on the 2020/21 budget position	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
Loan / Loan Facility Application Key	To agree a business loan application relating to a local business	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
Birkenhead One Stop Shop Key	Proposal for the relocation of the Birkenhead One Stop Shop and implementation of new service model	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Regeneration and Place, Alan Evans
Northwest Community Bank Key	Update and decisions on Community Bank	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
Edsential Update and Finance Key	Update and decisions on Edsential	Between June 2021 and September 2021	Director of Resources, Share Halewood
Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation Key	Report on accreditation being sought from the Real Living Wage Foundation following a report to Cabinet on 27 July, 2020	June 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
One Wirral Change Programme Key	This report provides an overview of the Council's emerging change programme	July 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
Budget Monitoring Quarter 4 Key		June 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
Treasury Management Monitoring 2020/21 (Year-end report) Key	Year-end report on treasury and cash management activities and the prudential Indicators	July 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED

Item	Brief Description	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Application for National Non Domestic Rate Relief	From time to time an organisation or body that may qualify for Discretionary Rates Relief to reduce their liability for paying Rates will apply to the Council for such support which requires a formal decision.	Between April 2021 and July 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood
Community Investment Bonds	Update on Community Investment Bonds	Between June 2021 and August 2021	Director of Resources, Shaer Halewood

STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS

Item	Reporting Frequency	Lead Departmental Officer
Performance Monitoring	TBC	Carly Brown
Financial Monitoring	TBC	Shaer Halewood
Work Programme Update	Every Meeting	Phil McCourt

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress
Working Groups/ Sub Committees				
Task and Finish work				
Spotlight sessions / workshops				

Corporate scrutiny / Other				

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MINUTE EXTRACT

COUNCIL – 22 MARCH, 2021

80 MOTION - SUPPORT FOR BRITISH VALUES LOCALLY

Councillor David Burgess-Joyce moved and Councillor Michael Collins seconded the following motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13:

“The United Kingdom has a long and proud history on the world stage and has been a beacon for peace and democracy, both within its own shores, and as a promulgator abroad. We have, as a result, a great reputation for attracting peoples from across the globe who want to make their home here for those very reasons; not least our tolerance of race, lifestyle, politics, religion and gender.

The exiting of the European Union in January 2020 prompted a flurry of new international trade deals, designed to complement the existing EU arrangement, together with a ramping-up of the establishment of the UK as a sovereign nation free to engage at will. This will lead to a greater drive to ‘Buy British’ and Wirral Council should play its part.

A number of key moments in 2020 proved that the British public, whether they voted for or against leaving the EU, do not feel any less proud of their country and it is important we as public officials support this important view as we extend our reach on the world stage. As a primary display of this, Council therefore requests Policy and Resources Committee to consider and to support the visible display of the Union Flag in all public areas with immediate effect and show it on all correspondence.”

Councillor Samantha Frost moved and Councillor Stuart Whittingham seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

“In paragraph 1 line 2 and 3 replace all text after democracy up to and including abroad and replace it with that has been the envy of the world.

In paragraph 1 line 3 replace the word attracting to welcoming.

In paragraph 1 line 4 and 5 replace all after our with British values of tolerance and respect.

In paragraph 2 line 1 replace the word prompted after 2020 with potentially may lead to...

In paragraph 2 line 2 replace the word designed with ideally.

In paragraph 2 line 4 insert the word potentially between This and will

In paragraph 3 line 1 and 2 delete the text between public and do.

Add the following to paragraph 3 line 6:

As part of this consideration Council requests that the Policy and Resources Committee consider that the Council already has a flag flying policy, the Union Flag is already flown on several public buildings and that any proposed changes to the flag flying policy should be subject to widespread public consultation that involves all communities, faiths and minorities groups.

Insert the following paragraph between paragraphs 1 and 2:

Council believes that pride in one's country is a spirit of comradeship for those who share our country, regardless of their background or walk of life. It is about recognising when our country is faltering and helping it to do better. Pride in one's country is representing what is best about it, and putting its best face forward, to the rest of the world. It isn't about believing our country is always right. It means apologising when our country has been wrong and learning from the mistakes of the past to make a stronger future.

Between paragraph 2 and 3 insert the following paragraph:

Council notes that the Council's Community Wealth Building strategy will lead to an increase of goods and services being procured locally, thus protecting and creating local jobs as well as retaining wealth in the local area.

Insert the following paragraph after paragraph 3:

This Council continues to uphold such pride in one's country and pride in our wonderful borough of Wirral and will continue to do so."

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter.

The amendment was put and carried (39:21) (One abstention).

The substantive motion, as amended, was then put, and it was –

Resolved (38:21) (Two abstentions) - The United Kingdom has a long and proud history on the world stage and has been a beacon for peace and democracy, that has been the envy of the world. We have, as a result, a great reputation for welcoming peoples from across the globe who want to make their home here for those very reasons; not least our British values of tolerance and respect.

Council believes that pride in one's country is a spirit of comradeship for those who share our country, regardless of their background or walk of life. It is about recognising when our country is faltering and helping it to do better. Pride in one's country is representing what is best about it, and putting its best face forward, to the rest of the world. It isn't about believing our country is always right. It means apologising when our country has been wrong and learning from the mistakes of the past to make a stronger future.

The exiting of the European Union in January 2020 potentially may lead to a flurry of new international trade deals, ideally to complement the existing EU

arrangement, together with a ramping-up of the establishment of the UK as a sovereign nation free to engage at will. This potentially will lead to a greater drive to 'Buy British' and Wirral Council should play its part.

Council notes that the Council's Community Wealth Building strategy will lead to an increase of goods and services being procured locally, thus protecting and creating local jobs as well as retaining wealth in the local area.

A number of key moments in 2020 proved that the British public do not feel any less proud of their country and it is important we as public officials support this important view as we extend our reach on the world stage. As a primary display of this, Council therefore requests Policy and Resources Committee to consider and to support the visible display of the Union Flag in all public areas with immediate effect and show it on all correspondence. As part of this consideration Council requests that the Policy and Resources Committee consider that the Council already has a flag flying policy, the Union Flag is already flown on several public buildings and that any proposed changes to the flag flying policy should be subject to widespread public consultation that involves all communities, faiths and minorities groups.

This Council continues to uphold such pride in one's country and pride in our wonderful borough of Wirral and will continue to do so.

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MINUTE EXTRACT

COUNCIL – 22 MARCH, 2021

81 **MOTION - COMMUNITY INVESTMENT BONDS**

Councillor Chris Cooke moved and Councillor Pat Cleary seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter, and it was –

Resolved (unanimously) –

Against the background of having to tackle a serious budget deficit, Council recognises the need to be innovative in securing a firm financial footing for the future of the borough.

Council believes that alternatives to borrowing from the Treasury via the Public Works Loans Board can be considered.

An increasingly popular and effective means of raising money for projects such as active travel, charging points for electric vehicles and renewable energy are Community Investment Bonds, sometimes known as Community Mutual Investments.

For example, these have been used successfully by West Berkshire Council to raise £1m to fund installation of solar panels on council buildings and by Warrington Council to fund its Affordable Green Homes project.

Community Investment Bonds can empower local residents by enabling them to invest in ethical projects benefiting their local communities for modest, but safe returns. They are an attractive and constructive alternative to saving with banks at low interest rates and with no guarantee that the money will be invested ethically. They can be an important addition to an area's community wealth building approach.

Council, therefore, asks that the Policy and Resources Committee includes in its work programme for the upcoming financial year an examination of Community Investment Bonds. This work to include:

- **A review of the use of Community Investment Bonds elsewhere in the country**
- **An assessment of their potential application to fund projects in Wirral**
- **An outline of the practical steps required to set up Community Investment Bonds in Wirral**

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MINUTE EXTRACT

COUNCIL – 22 MARCH, 2021

86 MOTION - REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Councillor Tony Norbury moved and Councillor Christine Spriggs seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter, and it was –

Resolved (unanimously) –

We as Wirral Borough Council recognise the extreme hardships faced by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from across the world, many fleeing from war, oppression and other human rights violations.

Council believes we as a council want to help and play our part in making the World a better place for all by pledging to become a recognised Borough of sanctuary, officially joining the network of councils who are already recognised as places of sanctuary and welcome for all.

Council would wish to make to make Wirral a borough where:

- **Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are treated with respect, dignity and equality**
- **A fair, humane and effective process is in place to support migrant communities**
- **An empathetic, people centred approach is in place**
- **Co-production and collaborative processes are valued, to engage the wider community and migrant communities**
- **The barriers to integration and interaction within the community are removed.**

Council asks the Policy and Resources Committee to include in its work programme for the forthcoming municipal year, to consider:

(1) embedding a borough of sanctuary and welcome workstream into our policy committee structure linking into the work already underway through our MEAS team linked to our schools and expanding BAME communities supported by our council partners at Wirral Change, The Deen Centre and The multi-Cultural Organisation

(2) by pledging to:

- **Challenge and campaign for migrant rights and against the ‘hostile environment’**
- **Celebrate the contribution refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities bring to the borough of Wirral**
- **Raise awareness about some of the issues these communities face**

- **Facilitate training for local businesses and organisations to ensure they can offer a service which is welcoming to all migrants**
- **Be inclusive throughout the process by listening and engaging with people with lived experience, community organisations, statutory services, faith groups, businesses and much more.**