

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 14 JANUARY 2010

## REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

### INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (IIP)

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#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates members on the outcome of our recent Corporate Assessment under the Investors in People Standard which shows that the “Managing Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that Wirral Council continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard.”

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Wirral Council undertook its first corporate assessment against the Investors in People Standard in December 2006. During the past fifteen months the organisation has undertaken a process of rolling review which has been overseen by the Managing Assessor and carried out by the Council’s trained team of Internal Reviewers. This has involved reviews of all of the Council’s Departments. Each of the Departments individually reached the required standard. The final intervention constituted the strategic element of the Review and this was undertaken by the independent Managing Assessor.

- 2.2. Throughout the rolling review 415 employees and managers have been interviewed which adheres to the Investors in People ratio requirements. As part of the overarching strategic assessment interviews were also undertaken with a proportion of the senior leadership team, elected members, full time union representatives and representatives of the Council’s equality groups.

- 2.3 The following objectives were identified and reported on throughout all of the rolling review interventions and detailed findings are evidenced in each of the rolling review reports that have been produced by the Internal Review Team for each Department. Those objectives were:

1. To review the overall effectiveness of communication across the Council. What worked well? Were there opportunities to strengthen practices?
2. How effective was the Council at sharing good practice within and across teams in order to improve performance?
3. To track through a number of audit trails to identify if the Council was effectively planning, actioning and evaluating its investment in training and development at a corporate level.

- 2.4 Under each of the objectives a number of strengths and continuous improvement opportunities were raised these included:-

1. **To review the overall effectiveness of communication across the Council. What worked well? Were there opportunities to strengthen practices?**

“The Council’s vision is clear and senior managers believe that this is in fact clearer than it has ever been. Senior managers frequently referred to the vision and strategy being more focused and there was a sound understanding of the Council’s five strategic objectives. Senior managers frequently described examples of how their departmental objectives were focused on meeting one or a number of these strategic objectives”.

“Development opportunities linked to the Skills for Life Agenda is an area that the Council has devoted significant resources to and continues to do so, with a view to providing appropriate development opportunities to all of its staff”.

“Sharing knowledge, learning and good practice is an area that people at all levels believe the Council is working hard to improve, with a number of examples provided”.

## **2. How effective was the Council at sharing good practice within and across teams in order to improve performance?**

“This is an area where managers and staff alike feel that the Council is making good progress in strengthening its overall approach. Senior managers described a variety of cross council groups that they sat on and which allowed information and learning to be effectively shared, for example the Chief Officers and Section Heads away days and the Corporate Performance Improvement group”.

“There is also evidence of learning being shared across the organisation with some senior managers describing how the Gateway Review process linked to major procurement exercises has been implemented successfully in one Department and how this learning is now being transferred to another part of the Council.”

## **3. To track through a number of audit trails to identify if the Council was effectively planning, actioning and evaluating its investment in training and development at a corporate level.**

“The level of input by staff into the planning process and decision making as well as their ideas and suggestions for improvement to services/processes being encouraged could be more consistent across Departments. The Review team identified some very good examples of some Departments where managers are engaging staff very effectively and there is clearly scope for the Review team to now look at how this good practice can best be shared.”

The Council was also measure against the IIP Framework and once again the findings were positive, but also highlighted some areas for development. The Framework looked at a number of specific headings covering the planning that has been undertaken, the actions taken against those plans and the review of the outcomes. This area is covered by 3 specific review areas:

### **1. Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation?**

In this area the review was positive and indicated that:-

“There is clear vision in place and a set of five strategic objectives which are well understood by the senior management team and to which regular reference was made. Involvement at senior management level in the planning process is extensive. Senior managers feel they are given input through effective delegation, direct input into departmental plan development, through discussions at the Chief Officer and Service Heads away days and through meetings with relevant Elected Members”.

“Relationships between the Council and representative groups are also overall considered by both parties to be good, allowing mostly for effective consultation to take place. With respect to unions, regular JCCs are in place as well as informal dialogue as required. Evidence that relationships are constructive can be seen in the way in which both parties conducted the job evaluation exercise, which has had relatively few appeals and improved terms and conditions for staff. Union representatives confirmed that they were also actively involved in this process right from the outset”.

## **2. Taking action to improve the performance of the organisation**

The review in this area showed:-

“Senior managers all described how they tried to be effective leaders and managers of their staff referring to such as examples as, regularly carrying out KIEs and supervisions where appropriate as well as one to ones in some instances, as a means of reviewing individual performance and providing feedback to people”.

## **3. Evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation.**

This area asks the organisation to demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation. Once again the feedback was seen as being very positive:-

“Members of the senior team demonstrated an understanding of the costs as well as the benefits of the Council’s investment in staff development”.

There was also positive comments about managers evaluating their investment in staff learning and development, how communication in the organisation had improved, the training that had been undertaken to support performance management was seen as now being embedded in the organisation and the changes made to the induction process for employees where seen as very positive. Key Issues was seen as an area which could be enhanced across some departments.

Overall the report is very pleasing and shows that the commitment we show to our employees in terms of their learning and development is now changing the direction of the organisation in a very positive way. Work will need to continue if we are to meet the challenges ahead but receiving IIP recognition is a notable achievement.

- 2.5 Wirral’s next review will be in November 2012 and at that time we could choose to be assessed against additional elements of the extended framework which will give additional recognition for the good practice undertaken. We also have the option to continue to use rolling reviews as undertaken this time. A further report detailing the ongoing developments and action planning will be brought back to Cabinet over the coming months.

## **3. Financial implications**

- 3.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

## **4. Staffing implications**

- 4.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report but what should be noted is the effort put into the rolling reviews by the internal reviewers across the organisation.

## **5. Equal Opportunities implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**6. Community Safety implications**

6.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**7. Local Agenda 21 implications**

7.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**8. Planning implications**

8.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**9. Anti-poverty implications**

9.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**10. Human Rights implications**

10.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**11. Social Inclusion implications**

11.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**12. Local Member Support implications**

12.1 There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

**13. Background Papers**

13.1 No background papers.

**14. Recommendations**

14.1 That this report is noted.

14.2 That all the internal reviewers and employees who took part are thanked for their work.

14.3 That a further report is submitted to this committee detailing plans and future developments in this area.

**Bill Norman**

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management.