

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 4 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

SUPPORT FOR WIRRAL'S COASTAL RESORT TOWNS

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report informs Members that along with other seaside local authorities, Wirral has been allocated a revenue grant of £200,000 to boost action in driving forward economic regeneration in their priority seaside towns – New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby.
- 1.2 The report outlines the type of economic activities the resources can support, and seeks Members views on how they wish to allocate the money between the three coastal resorts and how they want to involve the relevant Area Forums in the consultation and decision making process.

2. Background

- 2.1 In March 2010 the previous Government launched its latest strategy for seaside towns – *Strategy for Seaside Success: Securing the future of seaside economies*. To coincide with this announcement Wirral along with 24 other local authorities in England was awarded a grant of £200,000.
- 2.2 Seaside resorts have always played a unique role in our history, heritage and culture. However in recent years, many of the UK's seaside towns have struggled economically. Some seaside towns have managed to reinvent themselves, not only in making them attractive locations to visit, but also great places to live and work
- 2.3 The aim of the strategy is to ensure seaside towns have the necessary support they need to build on their heritage and take advantage of new opportunities to develop strong economies and communities for the future.
- 2.4 The £200,000 support to Wirral has been allocated to the seaside local authorities with the highest level of deprivation in accordance with the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007. This recognises the particular challenges these areas face, which may be improved by new and innovative approaches in seaside towns.
- 2.5 The allocation in the form of a revenue grant was awarded to Wirral in March 2010. The new coalition government decided to review all the investment decisions made by the previous government and local authorities were requested to hold back from committing the money until the review was completed. The Government has now confirmed that the Council can allocate this resource.

3. Activities that can be supported

- 3.1 The guidance provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in terms of what activities can be supported isn't prescriptive. However the key tenets are the need to drive regeneration and support economic development. Therefore interventions that will have the greatest impact in this respect will be encouraged.
- 3.2 Examples of new ideas and approaches local authorities are already taking to boost economic regeneration are as follows, but this is by no means exhaustive:
- Investment in new ways to improve economic prosperity focussing on innovation and collaboration with public, private and community, voluntary and faith organisations;
 - Creation of new workspaces that will support & grow local economies;
 - Support to voluntary and community sector programmes targeted at the most disadvantaged in the local labour market;
 - Enhancing neighbourhood management approaches, which build community capacity to boost local renewal;
 - Developing local practical skills training to stimulate employment and self employment opportunities;
 - Achieving "gold standard" of customer service in tourism and leisure sectors.

4. Methodology and Next Steps

- 4.1 The funding allocated to Wirral under this initiative is a "one off" and will not be repeated in future years. Projects or proposals that can clearly show long term sustainable economic benefits therefore will have the greatest chance of succeeding.
- 4.2 Members views are sought on how they wish to allocate the £200,000 between the three coastal resorts and what involvement the appropriate Area Forums should have with respect to the principles of the Big Society.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The resources were transferred from DCLG to Wirral at the end of March 2010. The grant is not limited to a specific financial year so there is flexibility as to when the funding is spent.

6. Staffing implications

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications arising directly out of this report. The initiative will be managed by Officers from the Corporate Services Department from existing resources.

7. Equal Opportunities implications

7.1 Implementation of successful project proposals is likely to bring about equal opportunities improvements and benefits

8. Community Safety implications

8.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

9. Local Agenda 21 implications

9.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

10. Planning implications

10.1 There are no immediate planning implications arising from this report.

11. Anti-poverty implications

11.1 Implementation of successful project proposals is likely to bring about significant benefits in this respect.

12. Human Rights implications

12.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

13. Social inclusion implications

13.1 Implementation of successful project proposals is likely to bring about significant benefits in this respect.

14. Local Member Support implications

14.1 This report has positive implications for the New Brighton, Hoylake & Meols and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards. Implementation of successful project proposals is likely to bring about significant benefits to residents in these areas.

15. Background Papers

15.1 Background papers in relation to this report are held by the Special Initiatives Team within Corporate Services Department.

16. Recommendations

16.1 Members views are sought on the allocation of the £200,000 between the three coastal resorts and the role of the appropriate Area Forums in the consultation and decision making process for this funding.

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