

WIRRAL COUNCILCABINET27 NOVEMBER 2008EXTRACT**264. TRANSFORMING WIRRAL – STRATEGIC ASSET REVIEW**

The Leader of the Council indicated that as this report proposed the start of a consultation process, interested individuals would have an opportunity to feed into that consultation process, if the recommendations were agreed.

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out a vision for transforming Wirral's use of assets in order to improve service delivery; provide better value for money; and support the regeneration of the Borough, particularly its most deprived parts. It recommended investing £20 million, over four years, to develop a strategic network of 12 state-of-the-art multi-purpose complexes. These would be a mix of brand new buildings and enhancements to existing facilities. It was proposed to develop high quality, energy efficient and well maintained facilities, equipped with modern technology (including free Wi-Fi access) and to consult with local people over extending opening hours to meet service users' needs.

To achieve the level of service improvement, whilst simultaneously controlling overall buildings related costs, required a strategic review of all the Council's properties and a reduction in the total number of publicly funded premises. The vision for the future was of much improved facilities, but not as many Council maintained buildings: the vision is 'Fewer but Better'. If the Council paid for the running costs of fewer buildings, Wirral residents would be able to enjoy the high quality and efficient modern facilities they deserved whilst the Council Tax could be kept at an acceptable level.

The Leader of the Council referred to the background to the report and increases in energy costs and indicated that his priority was to ensure that increased costs were not passed on to the Council tax payer.

The Deputy Leader of the Council referred to the transfer of assets to the community and the opportunity for residents to become involved in shaping the new services.

Councillor Stuart Kelly also referred to the transfer of assets to the community and the need for the administrative services of the Council to reduce its share of the costs.

The Leader of the Council hoped that the results of the consultation would be able to be reported to the Cabinet on 15th January 2009 and invited other private and public organisations to contribute to the consultation process.

The Leader of the Council moved an amendment, duly seconded and it was –

Resolved – That

(1) Cabinet agrees the recommendation as set out below:

That the proposals set out in the report for the strategic consolidation of the Council's asset base across the borough be agreed in principle and then be subject to public and staff consultation as described, with the results of that consultation brought to a future meeting of Cabinet.

and asks that a special Area Forum Conference/Conferences be convened as soon as possible in order to allow a full debate on the proposals in the report.

(2) Cabinet also asks that this matter be referred to a joint Scrutiny Committee, comprising of Finance and Best Value, Corporate Services and Culture, Tourism and Leisure Overview Scrutiny Committees, with a Chair to be elected at the meeting. Democratic Services be asked to make the appropriate arrangements for this meeting to take place as soon as possible; and

(3) the proposals set out in this report for the strategic consolidation of the Council's asset base across the Borough, along with the provision of a mobile library/one stop shop, be agreed in principle and then subjected to public and staff consultation as described, with results of that consultation brought to a future meeting of the Cabinet.