

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 15th JANUARY 2009

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/ DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

WORKING WIRRAL – WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report advises Members on the current situation with regards to the Working Neighbourhoods Fund resources.

2.1 It also requests authorisation for the appointment of consultants to develop further the Investment Framework to guide the allocation of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund resources when they are confirmed by Government for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

2.0 WORKING WIRRAL – WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND

2.1 The Working Wirral programme includes resources from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) and Wirral has been allocated £28,267,778m of WNF resources from 2008 – 2011 through the Area Based Grant. However, only the first year's allocation was confirmed by Government due to an error that had been made in the original calculation relating to how the funding should be allocated nationally across the local authorities.

2.2 The Government has now announced that following a review of the way in which eligibility for WNF was calculated they have drawn up proposals for revising the criteria and how it will be applied in respect of allocating WNF for 2009/10 and 2010/11. The Government are now consulting on these proposals and it is anticipated that they will confirm allocations for 2009/10 by the end of January 2009.

2.3 The proposed changes would mean that Wirral would receive an increased allocation of WNF and benefit by some £144,581 as follows:

2009/10

Original allocation: £9,841,046m Revised allocation £9,879,492m

2010/11

Original allocation: £10,238,708m Revised allocation £10,344,843m

3.0 WORKING WIRRAL COMMISSIONING – ROUND 1

3.1 Cabinet on the 13 March 2008 (Item 26 Minute 553 refers) agreed that Working Wirral resources should be used to commission activity to deliver the Investment Strategy priorities of tackling worklessness, improving skills levels and increasing enterprise, business growth and investment. These priorities are also reflected in Wirral's Local Area Agreement and in the Investment Framework for Employment and Enterprise which articulates the outcomes and outputs necessary to deliver the Investment Strategy's overarching vision for Wirral.

3.2 The Investment Framework for Employment and Enterprise was developed by Regeneris Consulting in order to provide the basis for commissioning targeted activity through the Working Wirral programme and it outlines three key priorities:

- Competitive Wirral People (individuals and communities)
- Competitive Wirral Places (locations and sites/premises)
- Competitive Wirral Businesses (start ups and existing firms)

3.3 Based on the Investment Framework a Commissioning brief was developed in June 2008 to commission the first round of Working Wirral activity to support the delivery of outcomes relating to Priority 1: Competitive People and this process has been overseen by Wirral's Economic Development and Skills Partnership. In addition Cabinet on 10th December agreed that resources should be allocated to activity identified by the Investment Strategy Board that supports the delivery of outcomes relating to Priority 2: Competitive Places and Priority 3: Competitive Businesses.

4.0 **WORKING WIRRAL COMMISSIONING – ROUND 2**

4.1 Work is now required to develop detailed commissioning briefs to ensure that further rounds of commissioning can be taken forward that deliver activity against each of the three priority areas once the Government confirms WNF allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11. This work would build on the Investment Framework to identify how the resources can best be allocated across the three priority areas to add value to other mainstream and regeneration activity and therefore maximise the agreed Investment Strategy outcomes. This work needs to be completed by the end of February 2009 to enable funding allocations for the 2009/10 financial year to be made.

4.2 Since the first round of Working Wirral commissioning was progressed there have been a number of developments in relation to the employment and enterprise agenda. This includes the implementation of the Department for Work and Pensions' and the Learning and Skills Council's ESF Co –financing activity, the North West Development Agency's proposals with regards to the Business Support Simplification Process and the recent Government announcements in respect of additional support to businesses and to Jobcentre Plus to address issues arising from the current economic climate. Further analysis is therefore required to identify how Working Wirral resources should be deployed to ensure that the programme will have the maximum impact for Wirral residents.

4.3 The proposed analysis would flow from the work previously undertaken by Regeneris Consulting to develop the Investment Framework and would build on this to assess where further activity should be targeted, what outcomes and outputs should be achieved and how the resources should be allocated across the priority areas. The work will cost a maximum of £15,000.

4.4 Given the timescales set out in paragraph 4.1 of this report and the detailed knowledge and clear links with the previous work carried out by Regeneris Consulting it is proposed that these consultants should be contracted to carry out this commission. The contract would therefore be progressed as an exception to the procurement procedure in accordance with Contracts Procedures Rules 5.2. This course of action has been agreed by the Council's Procurement Unit.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Wirral has been allocated £28,267,778 of Working Neighbourhoods Fund resources, subject to confirmation of the exact allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11. The allocation is

paid through the LAA's Area Based Grant. The cost of commissioning Consultants to develop further the Investment Framework will be fully funded from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

6.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The contract will be managed by existing staff in the Regeneration Department's Neighbourhoods team.

7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The implementation of Working Wirral will reflect the Council's commitment to equal opportunities.

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Projects proposed to be funded through Working Wirral are likely to have positive community safety benefits.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Working Wirral will have significant future benefits for this area.

12.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Working Wirral will have significant future benefits for this area.

13.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 This report will be of interest to all Members of the Council.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 The Working Neighbourhoods Fund Statement – DCLG and DWP Paper November 2007

Sub National Review of Economic Development – Report to Cabinet 6.09.07

Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007 – DCLG December 2007

Area Based Grant 2008/09 to 2010/11 – Report to Cabinet 10.01.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 23.01.08

European Social Fund Complementary Strand – Report to Cabinet 07.02.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 13.03.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 09.07.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 16.10.08

Working Neighbourhoods Fund – Report to Cabinet 10.12.08

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the allocation of a maximum of £15,000 for the appointment of Regeneris Consulting to further develop the Investment Framework to enable targeted commissioning of the Working Wirral programme to progress once WNF resources for 2009/10 and 2010/11 are confirmed by Government, be approved.

Jim Wilkie

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services