

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 12 JANUARY 2012

SUBJECT:	SUPPORT FOR WIRRAL'S COASTAL RESORT TOWNS
WARD/S AFFECTED:	NEW BRIGHTON
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, HOUSING & PLANNING
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report informs Members of progress with one of the proposals recommended for support in respect of the £200,000 coastal grant available for supporting economic regeneration in Wirral's coastal resort towns of New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby.
- 1.2 This report advises Members that it is not recommended that the Tidal Pool Project proceeds at this time because of insufficient funding to meet the costs of the project, no funding being in place for future maintenance and concerns over operational issues as set out in detail in the report and summarized in the risks section of this report and that as a result the Wallasey Sea Cadets', *Crows Nest* project be awarded the funds.
- 1.3 The report informs Members of the reasons for this recommendation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 Members are requested to agree that the funding allocation of £10,650 originally awarded to the Wellington Rd Conservation Area Society for their *Tidal Pool* proposal be reallocated to Wallasey Sea Cadets' *Crows Nest* project for the reasons set out in the report.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 At the meeting of Cabinet on 14 April 2011 [minute 371 refers], Members agreed that those projects ranked the highest at the Wallasey and New Brighton Area Forum, be allocated a share of the £100,000 grant available to stimulate economic regeneration in New Brighton.
- 3.2 This report also highlighted [para 5.5 refers] Officer's concerns at that time regarding one proposal in particular, *The Tidal Pool* project and that detailed discussions be held with the applicant, the Wellington Rd Conservation Area

Society in a bid to resolve the risks identified in implementing the project. Members were further advised that in the event that the risks were prohibitive then the Wallasey Sea Cadets project, *Crow's Nest* as the next highest ranked project on the list of projects should be awarded the funds instead.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 In March 2010 the previous Government announced that funding would be made available to local authorities to support the economic development of seaside towns. As a result Wirral, together with 24 other local authorities in England, was awarded a "one-off" grant of £200,000. Guidance for the use of this fund was not prescriptive, but had the key aim of supporting regeneration and economic development within the target areas.
- 4.2 At the meeting of Cabinet on 4 November 2010, Members agreed that the grant be notionally allocated on the basis of £100,000 to New Brighton and £100,000 to Hoylake/West Kirby. It was also agreed that the respective Area Forums should take a leading role in the decision making process and that recommendations would then be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet for a decision [minute 210 refers].
- 4.3 Following a meeting with the respective Chairs of the two Area Forums it was agreed that proposals be considered through the Participatory Budgeting process. This process has been used previously by Area Forums in respect of the 'You Decide' funding and enables local people to make informed decisions about their neighbourhoods and the targeting of public resources.
- 4.4 Applications for funding were invited between the 19th January and the 25th February 2011, resulting in 12 proposals totalling £414,485 in Hoylake/West Kirby and 12 proposals seeking £284,752 in New Brighton.
- 4.5 Special meetings of the respective Area Forums were held in March and applicants were given the opportunity to present their projects and take questions from the audience. Residents were then asked to score each project with the aim of establishing which projects had the greatest level of support from local residents.
- 4.6 The Wallasey and New Brighton Area Forum meeting took place in New Brighton on 17 March 2011 and this drew approximately 100 people, with twelve presentations facilitated on the night. A summary of all the projects and their respective scores is attached as an appendix.

5.0 TIDAL POOL PROJECT

- 5.1 This proposal proved to be the most popular on the evening and it proposes to bring back into use the tidal pool on New Brighton beach, at the bottom of Victoria Rd as a paddling pool. This would encompass the rebuilding of the existing walls that were damaged over forty years ago with the £10,650 grant award earmarked exclusively for this activity.

- 5.2 Officers have met with the applicant, the Wellington Rd Conservation Area Society on a number of occasions over the last six months and offered professional assistance in terms of the Council's concerns. These concerns are set out in the paragraphs below. Unfortunately, despite making some limited progress on some of the issues it has not been possible for the applicant, in the view of Officers, to satisfactorily address these issues and there are a significant number of risks that remain if this project was to attempt to proceed.
- 5.3 The applicant is continuing to request more time, in addition to the six months that have already been given, to address the project risks, to form a Friends Group and seek further funding from grant sources or sponsorship. It is the view of Officers that there is no immediate prospect of the applicant being able to do all of these things even with a further extension of time. Therefore, in these circumstances it is recommended that this project cannot proceed at the present time and that the grant money should be awarded to another project. The concerns are as follows:

Preliminary Works

- 5.4 Coastal Engineers within the Department of Technical Services have stipulated that prior to any refurbishment works it will be necessary to undertake a detailed structural inspection of the existing structure in order to determine whether the breach in the current wall if repaired would be able to retain water. The applicant has approached two coastal consultancy engineers with their own specification and believes that a detailed study can be achieved for less than £1,000.
- 5.5 However the applicant did not budget for this requirement in their original application and therefore there is no budgetary provision for such a structural inspection. If the grant were to be used for this purpose this would leave a shortfall in the sum available to construct the facility. In addition Officers are of the opinion that the specification prepared by the applicant would not as it currently stands meet the Council's minimum requirements and the costs of any study may be actually higher.

Project Costs

- 5.6 With a sum of only £10,650 available for the works no provision has been made within the quote submitted by the applicant in respect of the following fees:
- Design fees;
 - Planning fees (if required);
 - Marine Management Organisation (MMO) licence;
 - Fees to ensure adherence with CDMR (Construction, Design and Management Regulations) health & safety requirements;
 - Provision of penstock valve to ensure pool can be drained for maintenance purposes.

- 5.7 Officers believe that such fees could be in the region of £3,000 or above and there is no budgetary provision for these costs available. In addition the quote for the works to the tidal pool has been provided by a local contractor who is neither Constructionline or CHaS registered. This is a requirement for all contractors undertaking construction works for the Council.

Maintenance Requirements

- 5.8 Upon completion of the proposed works, the asset would as a public amenity need to be formally adopted by the Council, who would be responsible for incorporating the facility within it's maintenance regime. As this facility would in all likelihood prove popular with young children it would require daily inspection to remove any hazardous materials – broken glass, cans etc. Failure to adhere to this would leave the Council exposed to claims that it would find difficult contesting.
- 5.9 Currently all the authority's outdoor play areas are inspected weekly and based on current rates provided by the Department of Technical Services, Officers have estimated that the cost of annual inspections could run to £9,000 per annum, notwithstanding any additional costs that might be incurred in having to drain the pool in order to de-silt it.
- 5.10 As the Council would have to maintain the facility in perpetuity, Officers have undertaken a detailed examination of all lifetime (100 year) maintenance costs. This includes a partial re-build after 10 years, penstock valve replacement after 20 years and a complete rebuild after 40 years. Using recognised Treasury guidelines, Officers believe that a sum of circa £350,000 would now need to be found by the Council to provide the necessary budget to undertake maintenance and inspections over the next 100 years.
- 5.11 The applicant has indicated that a Friends Group could be formed to take on responsibility for the weekly inspection regime and in order to keep costs down the pool would only open during June, July and August. They have also requested that in time they may be able to access additional external resources to cover some of the costs reported. However, at this time there is no Friends Group in place, although discussions may have commenced on this and it is not clear if such an arrangement when finalized could meet the Council's health and safety requirements. In addition external funding resources are very constrained at the present time and there are no other alternative sources of funding which can be identified at this time.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 6.1 Council Officers identified the potential risks in relation to this project in the previous report to Cabinet.
- 6.2 These risks have now been fully investigated by Officers with the grant applicant and it is the view of Officers that significant risks still remain. These are set out in detail in the report but can be summarized as follows:
- The sum applied for is insufficient to cover all costs associated with the project as proposed;

- The specification proposed for the works is not sufficiently robust to meet the Council's requirements;
- There is additional uncertainty about the overall cost, because the sole estimate provided was from a contractor who is not on the Council's approved list;
- The project would leave the Council with a significant ongoing liability for maintaining the pool whether it operates for the whole year or only for several months of the year;
- To avoid accidents and protect the Council from legal liability, there would be a need to have an effective inspection regime in place. This would incur further ongoing costs.

6.3 The Wallasey Sea Cadets proposal requested an estimated grant of £18,576 subject to finalizing the detailed specification and inviting competitive tenders for the building works. However, the *Tidal Pool* Project only has a grant sum of £10,650. As the Wallasey Sea Cadets project is seeking funding for internal building works to create an additional classroom, the specification for these works can be reviewed and competitive tenders sought, which it is anticipated will enable this project to be delivered with the available grant.

7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Further time could be given to the applicant to address the significant number of risks identified in relation to this project, but given the nature and costs that would be involved in doing so, it is considered unlikely that the applicant will be able to satisfactorily address all of the risks.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Participatory Budgeting approach taken to evaluate the proposals originally embodies community consultation, enabling neighbourhoods to play an active role in determining the targeting of the resources in question. The process undertaken as part of determining the allocation of these resources will be fully reviewed and a report will be brought forward that suggests how such exercises could be undertaken with the Area Forums in future.

8.2 Through this process there was greatest community support for the *Tidal Pool* project, but this project cannot unfortunately be delivered at this time (for the reasons set out in this report) and therefore to ensure that the money is used for the benefit of the community in New Brighton, it is proposed that the Wallasey Sea Cadets' *Crows Nest* project is supported

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

9.1 The project that is now being proposed for funding is likely to impact on groups from the voluntary, community and faith sector, who will be able to access the improved facilities within the Sea Cadets hall in New Brighton.

10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

10.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report. The initiative as a whole will continue to be managed by Officers from the Regeneration, Housing and Planning Department from existing resources.

10.2 Given the “one off” nature of the resources in question, it will be made clear in the Funding Agreement with Wallasey Sea Cadets that there is no further funding available from the Council to sustain the project beyond the grant awarded to it.

11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

12.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

12.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out in March 2010 in respect of the Area Forum’s funding process (‘You Decide’).

13.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no direct carbon reduction implications arising from this report.

14.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no immediate planning and community safety implications arising from this report. Planning consent for the *Crows Nest* proposal may be required and will be addressed as appropriate through the planning process.

REPORT AUTHOR: Neil Mitchell
Project Manager
telephone: (0151 691 8423)
e-mail: neilmitchell@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

There is one appendix attached to this report.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Background papers and information used in the preparation of this report are held by the Regeneration Team within Department of Regeneration, Housing and Planning.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Support for Wirral’s Coastal Resort Towns	4 November 2010
Cabinet – Support for Wirral’s Coastal Resort Towns	14 April 2011