

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

2ND FEBRUARY 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WIRRAL YOUTH ZONE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR ANN MCLACHLAN</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>YES</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report aims to provide an update on the progress made with the potential developments of Wirral Youth Zone and provide recommendations for progression.
- 1.2 Wirral Youth Zone is a proposal to build an iconic, modern state of the art centre for young people.

Wirral Youth Zone will give our young people a modern, safe and purposeful alternative to the streets and the TV screen. The new youth zone will help our young people keep active and healthy, whilst encouraging them to be positive and aspirational.

The building will include sports hall, multi purpose areas, Kitchen/café, mentor rooms, recreational areas, 3G multi purpose pitch, fitness suite and arts facilities.

It will be open to children and young people aged 8-21 and up to 25 for those with a disability, Wirral Youth Zone will offer a full range of sporting and artistic opportunities. It will be open, 7 nights a week, 52 weeks a year including during school holidays from 8am-10pm. (Vision Document- see Appendix 1).

- 1.3 The ambition would be for the facility to be opened by the end of 2013.
- 1.4 £200,000 has been committed to this project from 2012/13 Wirral Council Capital Funding, this was approved at Cabinet meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 To continue to explore options for the project to include a feasibility study with costs for Option A & Option B using the £200,000 allocation previously agreed.

### **3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 3.1 After exploration of the project through the steering group and partners during the past 12 months it is clear it is still a worthwhile and needed development for Wirral and therefore the next stage of planning is required.
- 3.2 The allocation of £200,000 previously agreed for this project will enable further exploration to be carried out.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 A report was presented to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010 (see Appendix 2) detailing the background of this proposal. This report was under the title of 'Birkenhead Youth Zone', the steering group changed the name to 'Wirral Youth Zone' as it will be a facility aiming to benefit all young people in Wirral. From this report the following recommendations were approved:

- (1) Cabinet agrees to further work being undertaken in order to investigate the feasibility of this facility.
- (2) To avoid duplication in the development of youth provision on Wirral, membership of the Steering Group should reflect the range of partners involved in developing the Youth Offer on Wirral.

The steering group has been meeting monthly with the following members:

- Andy Groom, Merseyside Fire Authority
  - Councillor Ann McLachlan, Local Councillor for Bidston and St James and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning
  - Barry Natton. Representative of Wirral Methodist Church Circuit
  - Blair Kirkby, Minister of Charing Cross Methodist Church
  - Christopher Lucan-Pratt, Merseyside Police
  - Dawn Tolcher, Project Manager for Children and Young People, Wirral Council
  - Councillor Jean Stapleton, Local Councillor for Birkenhead and Tranmere and Cabinet member for Community and Customer Engagement.
  - Jeremy Glover, Onside North West
  - Julia Hassall, Head of Branch for Social, Wirral Council (chair)
  - Paul Murphy, Merseyside Fire Authority
  - Paula Basnett, Invest Wirral
  - Peter Bibby, Representative of Birkenhead Youth Club
  - Rob Carter, Onside North West
  - Rebecca Baron, Onside North West
  - Councillor Sheila Clarke, Local Councillor for Bebington and Chair of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2 The site in Birkenhead was chosen as Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service approached Wirral Council to discuss utilising some of their land to develop a Youth facility. There is a Private Finance Initiative to redevelop Birkenhead Fire Station, the new build will free up a large area behind the station. The PFI development is planned to start May 2012 and be completed by May 2013.

This has progressed as Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has already considered a report on the proposals and has agreed to support the project and is keen to maximize the support its new community fire station will give to Wirral's young people. It has been agreed in principle that the Fire Authority would provide the land freed up by the building of the new fire station to support the Youth zone for free (subject to full Fire Authority approval and legal agreement). The Fire Authority is also keen to explore how it can use its resources to support the project in the wider sense and in particular how the Firefit brand can be used to support the scheme.

The local authority will have no involvement with the PFI developments.

The Fire Service has an excellent track record of engagement with such projects, for example the Wallasey Fire Station is used as one of for Youth Hubs in Wirral. They are also currently working in partnership to develop a similar provision in Toxteth.

The location was approved of due to it being in a 'neutral' area with excellent transport links.

4.3 The Police are also fully supportive of this proposed development. They are especially encouraged by the location of the facility. The Vulnerable Locality Index (VLI) is a scanning tool bringing together crime and deprivation measures to geographically identify priority neighbourhoods. The location of the Wirral Youth Zone would be within a 'vulnerable' area and would support the work of the Safer Stronger Communities Initiative which aims to target and reduce crime by engaging the community and jointly working with partners.

4.4 Onside have continued to guide and advise the project due to their experience of developing 5 Youth Zones across the North West. Onside was developed after the success of the developments of Bolton lads and Girls Club, aiming to replicate the model in other areas. There have been 4 further visits to Bolton, attendees have included:

- Steering group members
- Current Youth Service Staff
- Members of Charing Cross
- Members of Merseyside Fire and rescue Service
- Frank Field MP
- Councillor Brian Kenny

All who visited Bolton agreed Wirral need a similar provision.

4.5 The £50,000 allocated to the exploration of the project from the 2011/12 budget has been used to pay Onside for their time and resources which have included:

- Hosting visits to Bolton Lads & Girls Club
- Site Appraisal
- Attendance & support at Steering Group Meetings

- Commissioning of early Architects impression
- Assistance on production of vision document, including printing
- Support for communication sub group and plan
- Advice re : Operating structure & systems
  - Governance
  - Partnership developments
  - Legal relationships/documentation
  - Strategic development

4.6 The projects developed by Onside have a specific funding model which estimates running costs to be £1million. This revenue is met by; the local Council being responsible for 40% (this is brokered by the Council with contributions coming from partner organisations such as the Police and Health) In the case of the Council's contribution this would be met by either new growth or from existing funds.

Onside would form a charity to manage and develop the facility.

4.7 Charing Cross Methodist Church has been an active partner in the steering group and planning of the project. There have been discussions to include their current land in the footprint of the new build; this would enable a larger facility to be built. Members of the Circuit (representing all 24 Methodist churches in Wirral) have given their approval for discussions and exploration of the potential partnership to continue, this will be supported through some further consultation with support from Onside and Wirral Council to ensure it meets the needs and objectives of the organisation and the aims of the project.

4.8 The final proposal will depend upon the final decision from Charing Cross Methodist to be part of the build, therefore below are 2 options A and B. Option A would be the preferred alternative at this time.

#### Option A

To build Wirral Youth Zone on the land donated by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, land currently occupied by Charing Cross Methodist Church and the road between (Bright Street) to include facilities and activities detailed above for young people in Wirral. Estimated size of the plot would be 7100 square meters. No surveys have been carried out to date to confirm the road area could be utilised.

#### Option B

To build Wirral Youth Zone on the land donated by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to include facilities and activities detailed above for young people in Wirral. Estimated size of the plot would be 4000 square meters.

4.9 The project will achieve the Council's 4 corporate objectives by:

#### **Your Family**

By providing such a wide range of opportunities for young people this will benefit them and their family as a whole. To ensure this proposal is designed to meet the needs of the family there will be regular consultation and input

from the following to obtain their knowledge on designing the best possible service for young people:

- Young People, they will be key to driving and developing the youth zone.
- Parents of young people
- Local Residents
- Current youth providers, this development will want to compliment what they do not duplicate.
- Local partners such as police, health, schools, extended services.

The scheme will ensure services are fully inclusive and accessible for young people with disabilities. It will also particularly support young people from disadvantaged areas.

### **Your Neighbourhood**

The project will contribute to making Wirral's Neighbourhood safer as the young people will, have a place to go which will deter them being involved in anti social behaviour on the streets. This is vital in the locality as there has been series of anti social behaviour, particularly during the recent riots (August 2011). This will also have a positive effect on street cleanliness and the quality of the local environment as evidence from the other Youth Zones have proven if they have somewhere to go they will be less likely to cause problems in the area.

### **Your Economy**

The financial model used for the youth zones will lead to investment from local business to support the capital and revenue costs of the facility. Employment, volunteering and training opportunities will also be increased.

Young people will also be offered training opportunities and support with educational activities.

### **Your Council**

This development will ensure that Wirral's service for young people in their leisure time is first class. It will be affordable and sustainable. This will also create a working partnership between public, private and the community, voluntary and faith sector. All these partners have one aim for this project 'To improve opportunities for our young people'.

The project will enable a more effective and efficient way to provide youth services both financially and to meet the needs of young people.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 This will be a voluntary sector led and managed initiative requiring some financial support from Wirral Council. The financial risk is predominately with the Charity which will be established to take the project forward. The risk will be to the Council's reputation if it were not able to meet any contractual obligations it might enter into with the new charity. To remove this risk there will be a legal agreement and partnership agreement.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6.1 No other options were considered as the land available from the Fire Service free of charge is in a prime location for transport links, neutral ground and targeted youth activity. Due to the success in other areas the Onside model is the one to be followed.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

7.1 A communication sub group has been established. This consists of:

- Councillor Jean Stapleton
- Representation from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Paula Basnett, Invest Wirral
- Dawn Tolcher, Wirral Council
- Lindsay Davidson Head of Youth & Play Service, Wirral Council
- Rebecca Baron, Digital Communications Manager, Onside

A communication plan is being written to ensure all stakeholders are consulted with effectively and in appropriate timescales to gain necessary input but not to raise expectations.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

8.1 The Wirral Youth Zone will be managed by a newly formed charity. There will be opportunities to develop the work of local voluntary sector led services as often finding appropriate venues is difficult.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

9.1 **FINANCIAL** The Capital expenditure is estimated to be up to £6.5 million. In other Youth Zones developed by Onside this was funded from public, private and voluntary sector contributions. Merseyside Fire Authority has confirmed that they will not be charging for the use of the land and they will present project as proposal for capital investment.

£200,000 has been committed to this project from 2012/13 Wirral Council Capital Funding.

Utilising the Onside model it is anticipated for the operation of the facility the costs to Wirral Council would be £400,000 per annum.

9.2 **STAFFING** No additional resources will be required from Wirral Council. To continue with this exploration phase of the project it will be managed through an existing Project Manager of Children and Young People's Department. Support from other employees will be utilised when specific expertise is needed.. The role of Onside will continue to support with specific tasks, the cost for this will be included in their fees which is detailed above in overall Capital costs.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 A legal agreement will be written for both partnerships with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and Charing Cross Methodist Church.

10.2 There will also be an agreement with new Charity and Wirral Council to ensure investment to the build are used for the intended purposes. This will include monitoring and evaluation requirements.

### **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The facility will be accessible for all user groups and will work with partner organisations to tackle any equality issues.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- |                                       |         |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| (a) Is an EIA required?               | Yes     |
| (b) If 'yes', has one been completed? | 4.01.12 |

### **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 None applicable.

### **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The site is designated as Primarily Commercial Area in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) saved by direction of the Secretary of State in September 2007. Any future planning application would be assessed for compliance with UDP Policies RE10 'Criteria for Community Centres and Facilities' and SH6 'Development Within Primarily Commercial Areas', which direct community facilities that are intended to serve wider catchments towards urban commercial locations and contain criteria to protect the neighbours amenity.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Dawn Tolcher  
Project Manager  
telephone: (0151) 606 6805  
email: [dawntolcher@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:dawntolcher@wirral.gov.uk)

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1- Vision Document

### **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Appendix 2- Cabinet Report 9.12.10

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>9.12.10</b>