

Wirral Improvement Board 27 April 2012

Key Communication Messages

1. Member Development

The Improvement Board welcomed the work of the Member Training Steering Group in developing plans for Member Training and linking these to the five agreed priorities for the Improvement Board. It acknowledged that training and development of Members is a key issue at the heart of improvement planning in Wirral. The Board agreed a small sub group to work with the Steering Group and develop the proposals further. This work will in particular consider other ways in which Members can learn eg through site visits to other councils and through mentoring and buddying in addition to formal training sessions. Consideration will also be given to developing an accreditation programme for Member Training to demonstrate this is high quality. It will also consider using Members from other councils (including the LGA Member Peers) to deliver sessions as well as identifying core issues on which Members would be required to complete training especially if they have leading roles (eg Safeguarding). A further, detailed report will be brought back to the next meeting.

2. Corporate Peer Challenge

Wirral has commissioned a Corporate Peer Challenge from the LGA and this is due to take place week commencing 9 July. This is a really positive opportunity for the authority to obtain 'critical friend' feedback from senior colleagues (Members and officers) from the local government family and help shape the key priorities for the council's improvement journey over the next two year period. It is not an inspection and has a very different ethos and approach and this is something the authority has decided to commission rather than it being imposed. The report of the peer challenge will be published by the authority so it is transparent. The Peer Challenge team will be engaging widely with Members and groups of officers across the council as well as with key partner organisations.

3. Forward Plan

All councils have to have a Forward Plan which is published to show everyone which key decisions are coming up over the coming months so that anyone interested can plan ahead and ensure they can get the information they need. Wirral's Forward Plan is going to be improved and developed so it becomes a useful document for Members, staff and the public alike. The Forward Plan will in future routinely be considered by the Improvement Board.

4. Changing Wirral's Governance Arrangements

Wirral is considering changing its governance arrangements and has an all party Member Democracy Working Party overseeing this work on options. The Working Party has agreed to work with the Improvement Board over the

coming year to look at works well in other local authorities and to ensure that any future proposals are fully thought through and represent best practice in governance.

5. Improvement Planning

The Board welcomed Michael Frater as senior interim support to the Acting Chief Executive who is bringing additional expertise and capacity to support improvement. Michael outlined the work programme for the next few weeks where he will be speaking to all elected Members and engaging with groups of staff to ensure he captures accurately the perceptions of those involved with Wirral council across the board. The Executive Team has also held an away day and is working up proposals for an improvement strategy to improve culture and ways of working. The three Group Leaders are all committed to this and will be working together with the officers over the coming months to refine this approach further.