

## **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/12**

### **1. Scope of Responsibility**

- 1.1 Wirral Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Wirral Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, Wirral Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme and is administered by Wirral Council. This covers the pensionable employees of the Merseyside Local authorities and a range of other scheduled and admitted bodies. The MPF is subject to the governance framework of Wirral Council.
- 1.4 Wirral Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' June 2007. A copy of the code is on our website at [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk). This statement explains how Wirral Council meets the requirements of Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006 (amended 2011) in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

### **2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework**

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values for the direction and control of the Authority and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It can not eliminate all risk of not fully achieving policies, aims and objectives, and therefore provides a reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Wirral Council policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

### **3. The Governance Environment**

**3.1** The CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' June 2007 lays down principles of governance best practice. Key elements of the systems and processes which comprise the Council's governance arrangements are described in the following paragraphs. Our assessment is based upon the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance.

#### **3.2 Developing and Communicating our Purpose and Vision**

- The development of the Authority's purpose and vision is undertaken through corporate and business planning, linked to wider community planning for Wirral.
- Four key themes make up and provide the foundation for the Corporate Plan:

"Your FAMILY"

"Your NEIGHBOURHOOD"

"Your ECONOMY"

"Your COUNCIL"

- The Leader of the Council changed on a number of occasions during the financial year and it should be noted that no one party had a majority rule within Wirral during 2011/12. The elections in May 2012 resulted in the Council coming under a Labour administration. Whilst retaining the four key themes the proposed Draft Corporate Plan 2012/13 was subsequently amended by Council in April 2012 and revised again in July 2012.
- Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Executive Board is in place to lead and develop the vision for the Borough of Wirral set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. The LSP Executive Board provides strategic guidance to partner organisations and relevant partnerships operating within Wirral's Strategic Partnership and works collaboratively to remove any barriers that hinder or otherwise prevent the vision for the Borough of Wirral being achieved.

#### **3.3 Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service**

- The Council's Customer Access Strategy, which was updated during 2011, provides the direction and focus for all services to work together in achieving cost-effective and excellent services for the customer through specific actions and projects. The overall objectives of the Strategy are to improve the quality of life for Wirral people, working with our partners to deliver the best services we can in the most efficient and effective way. It directly supports the Corporate Plan's aim of engaging and empowering individuals and communities in the design and delivery of council services.

- The Council has an objective performance management framework. The system is driven by the Corporate Plan, which focuses attention on corporate priorities. This is cascaded through departmental service plans, individual employee key issue exchanges and action plans. It is clearly laid out in the annual service and financial planning and performance management cycle.
- All performance indicators and projects contained within departmental plans are reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

### **3.4 Measuring performance and value for money**

- The Council has in place a Medium Term Financial Strategy, updated annually to support the medium term aims of the Corporate Plan. This ensures the economical, efficient and effective use of resources, and secures continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised.
- A clear budget timetable is in place with regular monitoring meetings and liaison with the external auditors regarding the publication of the Council's accounts.

### **3.5 Roles and Responsibilities**

- Policy and decision making is facilitated via a Cabinet Structure with Cabinet Member portfolios.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Executive members and all councillors, along with remuneration details, are clearly defined in the Constitution.
- Roles and responsibilities of all senior officers, along with remuneration details, are documented in contracts of employment and job specifications.

### **3.6 Member/Officer Relations**

- The responsibility of the Chief Executive for all aspects of operational management is clearly stated in the Constitution.
- A Protocol on Member and Officer Relations is clearly stated within the Codes and Protocols of the Constitution.
- The Constitution includes the delegation of functions to individual Cabinet members.
- A full Scheme of Delegation is included in the Constitution.

### **3.7 Partnership Arrangements**

- Clear terms of reference are available for specific partnerships setting out the roles and responsibilities of the partnership board along with its purpose.
- A Partnership Framework and Toolkit has been developed and approved, however it is yet to be publicised throughout the Authority.
- The local Code of Corporate Governance, detailing how the Authority complies with the principles of good governance, was reviewed and updated as part of the work programme following the AKA report.

### **3.8 Standards of Conduct**

- The Council has a Standards Committee, which deals with matters relating to the conduct of Councillors, employees, complaints and probity issues, the terms of reference for which comply with latest guidelines from the Standards Board for England.
- The Chair of the Standards Committee is an independent member of the public. The number of independent members is three which meets the statutory requirement for 25% of the Committee to be independent.
- Steps are being taken to ensure appropriate action is taken to ensure the Council is in a position to discharge its duties and responsibilities in respect of Member standards as from 1 July 2012 arising under the Localism Act.
- There is a corporate conflict of interest form for completion by Members and Officers. Members' Conflict of Interest forms are available to the public online which adds to transparency.
- Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules are contained within the Council Constitution.

### **3.9 Demonstrating the Values of Good Governance**

- The transparency of the decision making process is served through the publication of agendas and minutes of all Council Committees, other than exempt items.
- Council call-in procedure allows members to 'call-in' decisions made by Committees of the Council for further consideration by the relevant review Committee.

- In order to meet statutory requirements Internal Audit reviews the operation of the internal control systems and this provides the basis of the Audit Annual Report which includes the audit assurance opinion.
- An Audit and Risk Management Committee, provides assurance about the adequacy of financial management, and reporting, and the management of other processes required to achieve the organisation's corporate and service objectives. It is independent of any other executive function.

### **3.10 Transparency of the Decision Making Process**

- The Cabinet takes the Council's key decisions, but these are then subject to scrutiny.
- The public has access to all meeting minutes with the exception of exempt items.
- An Audit and Risk Management Committee provides independent assurance on risk management and control and the effectiveness of the arrangements the Council has for these matters.
- A corporate complaints procedure is in place.
- Codes of Conduct for Members and employees are in place.

### **3.11 Quality of Reporting**

- All committee reports require the following sections to be completed:- Implications for voluntary, community and faith groups / Resource implications: Financial; IT; Staffing; and Assets / Legal implications / Equalities implications / Carbon reduction implications / Planning and community safety implications. For ease of reference details of the 'Subject History' are also required.

### **3.12 Risk Management**

- A Corporate Risk Register is in place, which is monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis, and the Authority has in place a Risk and Insurance Team. The Executive Team also review the Register on a regular basis.
- The Council has systems for identifying and evaluating all significant corporate risks, developed and maintained with the participation of those involved in planning and delivering services.
- A Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy is in place along with a Grievance procedure for employees.

### **3.13 Use of legal powers to benefit citizens and communities**

- Scheme of Delegation of functions to Officers, included within the Council Constitution, identifies the legal powers of officers.
- The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management is authorised to institute, defend or participate in any legal proceedings in any case where such action is necessary to give effect to decisions of the Council or in any case where he considers that such action is necessary to protect the Council's interests.

### **3.14 Development of members and officers**

- All members receive an induction and attend a specifically organised event to introduce them to the Council and its departments.
- All employees are invited to a corporate and departmental induction.
- A 'Skills for Wirral' training and development programme is available tailored to both managers and employees. There are also currently three 'e-learning' courses which are mandatory for all staff: Equality and Diversity; Stress Awareness; and Fraud Awareness. In addition to these, Attendance Management e-learning is also mandatory for all managers.

### **3.15 Developing the capacity of people with governance responsibilities**

- The Audit and Risk Management Committee undertakes an annual self assessment exercise, utilising CIPFA's checklist, in order to assess its role and effectiveness.
- The Key Issues Exchange (KIE) process for all Council employees helps to highlight the requirement to develop skills and improve performance. It should be noted that the proposed performance appraisal system is in the process of being reviewed.

### **3.16 Encouraging involvement in the membership of the authority**

- The Council engages with communities through eleven Area Forums, providing an opportunity to shape services in their neighbourhood. Consultation has recently taken place to enable residents to influence and contribute to Neighbourhood Plans.
- There are different ways in which young people can have their voices heard and make a difference to the communities where they live:

Executive Youth Board  
Youth Voice Conference and Youth Parliament  
United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP)  
Youth Forums

- Wirral's Older People's Parliament provides a forum for older people to voice their opinions, inform the Council and influence its decisions. It is made up of 44 elected members, four from each of Wirral's eleven Area Forums.

### **3.17 Stakeholder Engagement and Scrutiny**

- Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Executive Board is in place to lead and develop the vision for the Borough of Wirral set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Wirral Council is committed to consultation with its citizens and undertakes borough-wide consultation on specific issues and in connection with budget proposals.

### **3.18 Public dialogue and accountability**

- The Authority's commitment to openness can be demonstrated by, for example, the Constitution, the approach to the Freedom of Information Act, the Customer Access Strategy, the availability of Committee minutes to the public apart from exempt areas, and the Area Forums that give local people a voice.
- As part of the Equality Duty 2010, which came into full force in April 2011, the Council has a legal requirement to give due regard to the impact of its policies and decisions on people who share protected characteristics (race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion / belief, gender re-assignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity).
- The use of the electronic tendering portal has been firmly established across the authority and contracts are being advertised via this system.
- An Annual Performance and Financial report is produced following the end of the financial year.

### **3.19 Responsibility to staff**

- The Consultation and Negotiation Policy dealing with the role of unions; One Brief; the Staff Suggestion Scheme; and the One Council magazine; all aim to promote open communication processes.

### **3.20 Role of the Chief Financial Officer**

- The financial management arrangements in place comply with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010). The local Code of Corporate Governance has been updated to reflect these arrangements.

- The Council has designated the Director of Finance as Chief Finance Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The financial management of the Authority is conducted in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules set out in the Constitution.
- The arrangements for the provision of internal audit are contained within the Financial Regulations included within the Constitution. The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting and other systems of internal control as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006 (amended 2011). The internal audit provision is managed by the Chief Internal Auditor and, takes as its reference the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom 2006.

#### **4. Review of Effectiveness**

##### **4.1 Introduction**

Wirral Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Audit Annual Report, and by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

##### **4.2 Corporate Review**

4.2.1 The following policies have been reviewed:

- The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) toolkit has been updated to reflect the legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is part of the Equality Act 2010.
- The Council Constitution has been amended to account for procedural changes. The Council has designated the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management as the Monitoring Officer who has a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure its aims and principles operate effectively and an annual report is submitted to Cabinet. A review of the Constitution is an objective in the Wirral Improvement Plan (see Appendix)

4.2.2 The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control reflects best practice guidance identified by the CIPFA Finance Advisory Network being informed by:



- Assurance statements from each Directorate based on management information, performance information, officer assurance statements and Scrutiny Committee reports.
- The work undertaken by Internal Audit, the External Auditor and other independent inspection bodies during the year.

### **4.3 Statutory Officer Responsibilities**

4.3.1 The Council Constitution sets out the responsibilities of both members and senior managers. Roles and responsibilities have been identified and allocated for the following three statutory posts:

Head of Paid Service	Chief Executive
Chief Financial Officer	Director of Finance
Monitoring Officer	Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

4.3.2 As a result of investigations arising from the Public Interest Report into the Highways and Engineering Service Contract (see 4.8.3), the Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer were suspended on 29 June 2012. The immediate appointment of interim officers effectively controlled the risk that may have arisen from this action.

### **4.4 Audit and Risk Management Committee**

4.4.1 To comply with professional best practice the Audit and Risk Management Committee carried out an annual review of its role. The self assessment from the CIPFA publication “A toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees” (IPF, 2006) was used for the evaluation.

4.4.2 The self assessment provides evidence that the Committee is achieving a high level of compliance with CIPFA guidance. However, improvements were identified which have been incorporated into an action plan which was agreed by the Committee of 13 March 2012 and performance against this Plan will be monitored.

### **4.5 Standards Committee**

4.5.1 During the year the Standards Committee, dealt with matters relating to the conduct of Councillors, employees, complaints and probity issues, the terms of reference for which complied with the latest guidelines from the Standards Board for England.

4.5.2 Following the Localism Act 2011, which abolished the Standards Board regime, a new regime to deal with Members / Co-opted Members has been established which includes new terms of reference for the Standards Committee and a new Member’s Code of Conduct.

## **4.6 Internal Control**

- 4.6.1 Weaknesses were identified in the Council's internal control environment. Whilst the procedures are generally in place there needs to be substantial improvement in applying the procedures as there have been significant issues for the Council during the year, principally through failures to follow systems and procedures correctly. A specific area for improvement identified was that senior management should take proper ownership of these issues and ensure that effective consistent governance arrangements are embedded within the culture of the organisation.
- 4.6.2 The Council's risk management process remains effectively coordinated. Issues regarding the updating of departmental registers, clear allocation of responsibilities and streamlined reporting lines need to be addressed as the Council's Strategy and framework are reviewed.
- 4.6.3 In meeting the financial challenges the Council has restructured and refocused service delivery areas which change the way in which the Council operates. These actions will continue to have significant impact on the control environment in many areas with the need to ensure that any resultant risks are effectively managed.

## **4.7 Internal Audit**

- 4.7.1 Internal Audit reviewed key corporate systems evaluating the adequacy of arrangements in areas such as performance management, compliance with legislative, HR and constitutional requirements with reports to Chief Officers identifying improvements. Audit provided input to improving the Council governance arrangements by attending the Corporate Governance Group and by a secondment to support the work of the Governance Team. The Chief and Deputy Chief Internal Auditor met the Audit Commission managers at approximately 3 monthly intervals to share issues, maintain relationships and agree coordinating of work where possible. Copies of all Internal Audit reports completed were shared with the Audit Commission.
- 4.7.2 Areas identified for improvement included:-
- ICT systems and controls – highlighted issues under Information assurance concerning roles and responsibilities, information risk strategy and staff training.
  - National Fraud Initiative – identified areas of savings and future actions.
  - Gifts and Hospitality and Conflict of Interest 2011/12 – identified variations in awareness and application of, the appropriate procedures.
  - Performance management – identified the need for more robust and transparent systems that include more detailed monitoring and reporting arrangements for managers, Chief Officers and Members.

- Compromise agreements – identified the need for improvements to documentary evidence to demonstrate the controls are operating as prescribed.

4.7.3 In his Annual Report for the year ending March 2012, based upon the outcomes from the Audit Plan, the Chief Internal Auditor concludes that the Council's internal control environment, taken as a whole is adequate and generally effective as there are sound systems largely in place though there must be substantial improvement in applying the procedures as there have been significant issues for the Council during the year, which have arisen principally because there have been failures to follow systems and procedures correctly.

4.7.4 The Chief Internal Auditor also notes that whilst recognising that there are control issues which need to be addressed, good areas of effective control have been identified and the Council continues to provide effective services in a very challenging environment.

4.7.5 As a result of an external report of the Council's Corporate Governance., Cabinet on 22 September 2011 requested proposals from the Director of Finance "on ways to strengthen the Council's Internal Audit team in order to ensure any warnings they issue are clearly heard and responded to". This led to the commissioning of an independent review of Internal Audit and is part of the Wirral Improvement Plan.

#### **4.8 External Review**

4.8.1 During the financial year 2011/12, and to date in 2012, the Council has been the subject of external reviews and inspections and a summary of the findings is noted in the following paragraphs.

4.8.2 AKA Report - Following an independent report, undertaken and produced by AKA (the trading name of Anna Klonowski Associates Ltd. "Renew and Refresh", September 2011), the Council reported and acknowledged that serious weaknesses within its corporate governance framework existed (see section 5.1).

4.8.3 Grant Claims And Returns Report 2010/11 – The Audit Commission issued an initial report in March 2012 and a Supplementary Report in June 2012. The latter highlighted issues particularly in relation to the West Kirby Marine Lake scheme relating to the award of the contract, contract management and reporting. (see section 5.2).

- 4.8.4 Highways and Engineering Services Public Interest Report June 2012 - In June 2012, a Public Interest Report was issued by the District Auditor following an external audit of the Highways and Engineering Services Contract Award. This identified weaknesses in the Council's arrangements relating to the award and management of the contract. This followed the earlier work in connection with the Highways and Engineering Services Procurement Exercise (HESPE) 2010. (see section 5.3).
- 4.8.5 OFSTED Children's Services Assessment 2011 – The conclusion of the assessment was that the Children's' Services at Wirral are performing excellently
- 4.8.6 The Office of the Surveillance Commissioners June 2012 – The arrangements for the use of authorisations under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, (RIPA) were inspected. The Inspector concluded that "Wirral exhibits a strong commitment to maintaining high standards of RIPA compliance. Their training programme is particularly commendable".
- 4.8.7 The Care Quality Commission and AKA Reports into Adult Social Services - Both reports identified concerns within the Department. In June 2012 a Peer Review was commissioned to assess progress and in preparation a separate Peer Challenge during May 2012 looked in detail at safeguarding practice. These acknowledged that the Department of Adult Social Services has made significant progress in relation to its performance with regard to safeguarding adults and also, more generally in relation to the rest of its work highlighting a number of examples of good practice. Both reports also contained a number of areas for further consideration and these have been taken into the Departmental programme management process for development and implementation.
- 4.8.8 The Annual Governance Report issued by the Audit Commission September 2012 – This included an adverse Value for money conclusion. This was due to the identification of weaknesses in the arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2012.

## **5. Significant Governance Issues**

- 5.1 The report by AKA (the trading name of Anna Klonowski Associates Ltd.), entitled 'Wirral Borough Council's Corporate Governance Arrangements: Refresh and Renew', was presented to Cabinet on 22 September 2011, and identified examples of failures/weaknesses in Corporate Governance:-
- Inadequate systems to manage performance and spot failures.
  - Being unable to understand and implement fees and charges properly.
  - Not being able to commission, manage and, where necessary, dismiss failing contractors and suppliers.

- Shortfalls in the way the Council evaluates the impact of its policies both prior to execution and in response to evidence about the impact.
  - A reluctance to listen to, and support, Wirral Council staff when they have tried to raise and resolve issues on the Council's behalf.
  - The reluctance of some staff to speak out because of the perceived impact this might have on them and/or their career at Wirral.
- 5.2 The Grant Claims report, June 2012, highlighted that there were failures/weaknesses in Corporate Governance under the following:-
- Reporting to Members, recording and risk management.
  - Fit for purpose Contract Procedure Rules.
  - Compliance with procedures.
- 5.3 The Highways and Engineering Services Contract Public Interest Report, June 2012, found significant weaknesses in managing the contract award and, with a number of specific recommendations, concluded that:-
- “the Council needs to make improvements to demonstrate good governance by improving the Council's arrangements for managing and reporting risks, declaring interests, reviewing and complying with contract procedure rules, delivering internal audit, reporting to elected members and responding to whistleblowing; and; to demonstrate value for money, by improving the Council's arrangements for tender evaluation and contract management, including contract variation, record keeping and performance management.”
- 5.4 The Annual Report of the Chief Internal Auditor noted the lack of consistently documented and communicated controls in some areas, including corporate governance and the resulting lack of consistency in the controls operated between departments and even within individual departments and service areas.
- 5.5 The Annual Governance Report 2011/12, September 2012, identified weaknesses in respect of financial resilience and securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness under the areas of:-
- Leadership and financial governance.
  - Lack of clarity about the Council's strategic priorities.
  - Weaknesses in internal control arrangements.
- 5.6 The key issues can be classified under five themes which have been identified as the priority areas in the Wirral Improvement Plan:-

- **Leadership, Political and Managerial**

Improve trust and respect between politicians and senior management.

Provide strong strategic leadership and oversight of delivery.

Identify and address development needs for Members and management.

- **Corporate governance and decision making**

Establish effective governance procedures, particularly with regard to risk management, whistle blowing and audit.

Ensure there is a clear protocol for sharing information with Members and a clear scheme of delegation.

- **Corporate Plan**

Agree a Corporate Plan that sets out clear priorities reflecting a good understanding of citizens' and customers' views through consultation, participation and localism.

Implement rigorous performance management and through effective performance appraisal arrangements secure specific outcomes for the borough.

- **Budget and financial stability**

Ensure there is a clear longer-term financial plan in place, linked to the Corporate Plan, setting out how the Authority will respond to reducing levels of resources.

Develop and enhance the Strategic Change Programme.

Develop a clear commissioning strategy for the Authority.

- **Critical service areas: Safeguarding and Developing the economy**

Ensure the safeguarding actions from the AKA action plan are implemented.

Design and deliver the action plan to address individual needs as informed by the safeguarding peer review.

Ensure we improve the skills of local residents and stimulate the private sector to grow and create jobs.

## **6.0 Improvement Measures**

- 6.1 In response to the AKA report of September 2011 a Corporate Governance Committee (with executive powers) was established, a team created and a comprehensive work programme, to address a range of priority areas of improvement in relation to corporate governance was developed. It was anticipated that this group would operate on a short term basis (it was decommissioned following its meeting on 8 February 2012) and would provide the appropriate building blocks for a wider Wirral Improvement Plan.
- 6.2 The Council is working in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA) and has established an Improvement Board (without executive powers), chaired independently by the LGA to continue and progress its work (the Board first met on 3 February 2012 and is due to operate in the medium term and possibly up to 2 years). The initial work programme was based around a number of Key Lines of Enquiry' (KLOEs).
- 6.3 Since March 2012, the improvement programme has progressed with the assistance of the Improvement Board. The original KLOEs have been subsumed into a comprehensive Wirral Improvement Plan. The Plan is based on the five Priority Areas referred to in section 5.6. Endorsed by the Improvement Board on 29 July 2012 and agreed by Cabinet on 6 September 2012 (see Appendix) the Plan will be monitored through a defined governance framework.
- 6.4 The appointment of a Chief Executive with experience of working at that level for a number of years was confirmed by Council on 16 July 2012 and the position was formally occupied on 3 September 2012. Since August 2012 an Interim Director of Finance, with similar multi-authority experience, has been in place to provide cover for the suspended officers.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 In 2011 and 2012, external reviews have identified significant weaknesses in the arrangements for corporate governance in Wirral. The issues have been recognised by Members and senior officers and there is joint commitment to making the necessary changes to strengthen governance at Wirral.
- 7.2 A programme for improvement commenced in November 2011 and has been developed with the support of the Improvement Board into a comprehensive Wirral Improvement Plan. The commitment of Members and senior officers will ensure the achievement of the Improvement Plan and will lead to significantly improved governance arrangements at Wirral.

Signed:

Chief Executive

Leader of the Council

Date