

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

29TH NOVEMBER 2012

SUBJECT:	WIRRAL YOUTH ZONE
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	JULIA HASSALL
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH
KEY DECISION	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the exploratory work that has been carried out in regards to the development of the Wirral Youth Zone since the last report was presented to Cabinet on 2 February 2012.
- 1.2 The previous Cabinet report detailed 2 land options (A and B) for consideration in order to progress the development of Wirral Youth Zone; this report provides the recommendation to progress with Option B and the justification for this recommendation.
- 1.3 This report recommends the allocation of £1million Capital funding during 2013/14 and to continue to work with partner agencies, in both the public and private sector in developing the scheme and securing the funding required to finance the building of the new Wirral Youth Zone.
- 1.4 The previous report detailed the benefits for young people in Wirral this facility would provide and how it would achieve the Council's priorities (these are summarised in Appendix 1).

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 A report was presented to Cabinet on 9th December 2010 to detail the ambition to develop Wirral Youth Zone. Wirral Youth Zone is a proposal to build an iconic, modern, state of the art centre for young people. The vision of the facility is outlined in the document at Appendix 2.
- 2.2 £200,000 is committed to this project from 2012/13 Wirral Council Capital Funding, this was approved at Cabinet meeting on 8th December 2011. A Capital Monitoring report was presented to the Cabinet on 18th October 2012 and it was approved to reduce the contribution to £100,000 in this financial year.
- 2.3 The proposed site in Birkenhead has been put forward by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service who approached Wirral Council to discuss utilising some of their land to develop a youth facility following the success of a similar Council/Fire Service facility in Wallasey. There is a Private Finance Initiative to redevelop Birkenhead Fire Station, this new build will free up a large area of land beside the current station. Work has started on the PFI development and will be completed by August 2013. It has been agreed that the Fire Authority would provide the land freed up by the building of the new fire station to support the Youth Zone at no charge to the Council (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. Appendix 3 details a Youth Provision the Fire Authority has already developed in Toxteth and it would use the learning from this for the Wirral Youth Zone. The Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have invited the steering group to visit the Toxteth site in December 2012.

- 2.4 The report in February detailed that there were 2 site options on which to build the Wirral Youth Zone. They were:

Option A

To build Wirral Youth Zone on the land donated by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service plus land currently occupied by the nearby 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 metres.

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 metres.

- 2.5 After further research the recommendation is to progress with Option B. It was evident through information and advice from Law, HR and Asset Management that with Option A there were going to be complexities in resolving several legal issues in relation to the Council owned land, the Church land, Scottish Power's interests and Bright Street. These issues could cause significant cost and time implications. Further delay in the project could cause a risk of losing the land offered by the Fire Service. Detail of each of these issues is expanded in Appendix 4. This document has been shared with Charing Cross Methodist Church, The Fire Authority and the steering group and they have been informed that this recommendation is to be made to Cabinet.
- 2.6 A meeting took place on 26th September 2012 with representatives of Charing Cross Methodist Church and Wirral Council Officers (Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Acting Director of Children's Services, Children's Services Project Manager). This meeting was arranged to ensure Charing Cross Church members were the first to be informed of the recommendation. Following this meeting a letter was received on behalf of the Church giving views on the recommendation that is proposed. It sets out proposals about how some of the issues of concern could be resolved. A follow up meeting has been offered in response to this letter which will explain that the problem is the time and cost implications involved in addressing each of the issues, which could have a significant impact on the partnership with the Fire Service and increase the risks of the scheme not being viable.
- 2.7 The Capital expenditure to build Wirral Youth Zone is estimated to be up to £6 million. In the first three Youth Zones developed by the Council's proposed partner "Onside", the Council's contribution was funded entirely by the Government's My Place Programme (which has now ended). Currently Preston, Wolverhampton and Chester are in development and each of the Councils has contributed £3 million Capital funding. The remaining Capital costs in each, is funded from public, private and voluntary sector contributions. The initial investment from Wirral Council, which this report seeks, is intended to be the catalyst to attract further investment.
- 2.8 Merseyside Fire Authority has confirmed that they will not be charging for the use of the land and they will present the project as a proposal for Capital investment.

2.9 The original ambition was for the facility to be opened by the end of 2013. This will not now be achievable. This means the project has fallen behind the timescales of the developments of the new Fire Station, but if the Council commit to a Capital allocation, the land is still available to be used. If the commitment is not made the Fire and Rescue Service may need to find an alternative use for the land.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 The main risk would be not being able to raise the remainder of the Capital investment to complete the build. "Onside" have now supported the development of five other Youth Zones in the North West; these projects have all raised the required Capital investment. Wirral Invest are a partner of the project and have been promoting it to potential investors, two of them visited Oldham Youth Zone due to their interest in the scheme.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Recently, an alternative option of a possible extension to the Council's leisure facility, Europa Pools has been considered. This is a popular leisure facility on a main arterial road in the centre of Birkenhead, adjacent to the bus station. Located next to a cinema, this would consolidate youth and leisure facilities in a prime location. The draw back to developing the youth facility on this site is that the preferable model is to build on a neutral site to secure maximum private sector provider investment. Only one of the other similar type youth developments, both regionally and nationally, is adjacent to Council facilities, it was built next to a school. There have been a lot of issues with this site and it is therefore strongly recommended to build on neutral land. Early local indications suggest that private sector business people would be more likely to invest on neutral land. It will clearly be important to build on joint activity programmes between the two nearby sites.

The proposed site is land available owned by the Fire Service, which subject to approval, would be provided on a "gifted" basis to the Council and is in a prime location for transport links and is on "neutral" ground, in an area easily accessible and frequented by young people. The Council has a history of positive joint initiatives with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services, for example the developments with Children's and Adults at the Wallasey Fire Station. This is a good public sector partnership, with an excellent track record of jointly working with young people.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The steering group for this project has continued to meet every 6 weeks to discuss the exploration and feasibility of the developments. The group consists of:

- Andy Groom, Merseyside Fire Authority
- 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
- Jeremy Glover, Onside North West
- Julia Hassall, acting Director of Children's Services (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 Tony Smith, lead member for children is to become a member of the Steering Group.

5.2 A Communication sub group has been established consisting of the following members.

- 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
- Communications Manager, Onside

A communication plan has been finalised to ensure good engagement and consultation with all stakeholders. If the recommendation to progress with this project is approved this plan will be implemented. The primary focus for initial consultation will be young people and existing youth providers.

5.3 A visit to Oldham Youth Zone took place on 5th September 2012. The following people attended:

- Councillor Phil Davies
- Councillor George Davies
- Councillor Moira McLaughlin
- Councillor Jean Stapleton
- Councillor Tony Smith
- Julia Hassall, Wirral Council
- Dawn Tolcher, Wirral Council
- Lorraine Anderson, Wirral Partnership Homes
- Paula Basnett, Wirral Invest
- 2 members of the local business community
- 2 members from Brightside Trust
- Jane Kennedy (Police Commissioner candidate)

The size of the Youth Zone in Oldham is the equivalent to the proposed Wirral Youth Zone site, utilising in the land offered from the Fire Authority. A debrief meeting from this visit was held on 31st October when those present confirmed their commitment to continuing to develop this project.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 The project will provide opportunities to develop the work of local voluntary sector led services as often finding appropriate venues is difficult.

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

7.1 FINANCIAL

7.2 Capital expenditure for the Youth Zone facility is estimated to be up to £6 million. In other similar provision this was funded from public, private and voluntary sector contributions. £100,000 remains allocated to this project from 2012/13 Wirral Council

Capital funding, and it is proposed that a further £1million is included in the Council's 2013/14 capital programme. It is assumed this would be unsupported borrowing, which would generate a revenue cost of £100k in the year after completion, taken to be 2014/15. This cost would be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Capital bid of £1m would be included in the 2013-14 draft Capital programme that is currently being assembled; Cabinet would review the proposed programme and agree it as part of the budget process that is concluded on March 5th2013.

- 7.3 For other similar models the annual running costs are approximately £1 million. The revenue on these models is met by 50% investment from private sector, 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). Regarding the Council's contribution to the revenue funding and staffing for the new Youth Zone, of up to £400k, it is proposed that this will be from the existing youth revenue budgets in 2014/2015; early identification of the exact amount and the funding source(s) should be agreed as part of this years budget process, concluded on March 5th2013. The remaining 10% comes from subscriptions by young people currently paying fifty pence per visit.
- 7.4 No additional resources will be required from Wirral Council to continue to develop the project. This will be managed by an existing Project Manager in the Children and Young People's Department with support from other departments as required.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Land transfer will bring responsibilities of ownership and may therefore incur cost whilst the site is vacant land. It may be prudent for the land transfer to take place once the overall project is further developed and commitment of match funding secured. A land transfer to the ultimate project partner as part of the overall project structure is under consideration.
- 8.2 The allocation itself is not a commitment and does not have a direct legal implication. The Legal structure for delivery of the project and procurement implications, of and relating to delivery, need to be worked on in conjunction with officers.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review can be found via the following link:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None Applicable

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 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 faculties that are intended to serve wider catchments towards urban commercial locations and contain criteria to protect the neighbours amenity.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 12.1 To seek agreement with the Fire Authority regarding the proposed transfer of land for the project.
- 12.2 To allocate £1million Capital funding during 2013/14 and to continue to work with partner agencies, in both the public and private sector in developing the scheme and securing the additional funding required to finance the building of the new Wirral Youth Zone.
- 12.3 To explore legal structures for developing and operating the Youth Zone and enter into such agreements as necessary in respect of match funding.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 13.1 To enable the next phase of the development of this project to proceed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1- Meeting the Corporate Objectives

APPENDIX 2- Vision Document

APPENDIX 3- Toxteth Fire Fit Hub

APPENDIX 4- Justification for Recommending Option B

Appendix 5- Letter from Barry Natton, Charing Cross

REFERENCE MATERIAL

For more information on Youth Zones visit www.onsidenorthwest.org

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	December 2010
Cabinet	February 2012