

DESCRIPTION OF OPTIONS

It is proposed that some of Invest Wirral's activities be reduced or ceased to realise budget savings of £352,000. This would affect the following services:

- **Business Angels**
Wirral Business Angels facilitates private risk capital of between £10,000 and £500,000 in fast growing local enterprises. Its cessation offers savings of £50,000..
- **Invest Wirral Event Programme**
Invest Wirral forums, workshops and events provide ongoing communication between the Council and businesses. They also provide an important opportunity for networking, supply chain development, collaborations and inter-trading. Its cessation offers savings of £50,000.
- **Social Enterprise Support**
Social Enterprise support provides a package of advice and brokering services for the sector. Its cessation offers savings of £52,000.
- **Business Investment Grant**
The Business Investment Grant Programme was established to provide grants of between £4,000 and £20,000 to local small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) with potential for growth. Its cessation offers savings of £200,000.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Council's business support offer needs to be reviewed and restructured in light of the unprecedented budget challenges the Council faces, as well as the new opportunities which will come on stream as a result of the new European regional Development Fund (ERDF) Business Support programme which will launch in the new year.

IMPACT

The potential savings identified in this report would result in the removal of some Local Authority funded business support services

MITIGATION

The impact of delivering these options would be mitigated as follows:

Business Angels – A business angels programme in Wirral has now been launched. In addition, several alternative sources of equity finance are available, there will therefore be a minimal impact on businesses resulting from this saving.

Invest Wirral Events Programme – Programmes similar to those previously delivered will be available via the new ERDF supported programme.

Social Enterprise Support - Wirral CVS has secured ERDF funding to create a post for business support with a specific remit for social enterprise development. It is likely that the new post will co-locate in Invest Wirral for at least 1 day per week. In addition, the Big Enterprise in the

Community programme supports social enterprises at all stages in Merseyside and therefore the impact of the cuts on the future development of local social enterprises is likely to be minimal.

Business Investment Grant - This grant was introduced during the midst of the worst stages of the current recession as banks had stopped lending to SME's. The number of applications for Grants has reduced as banks and other lending institutions begin loaning money to SME's