

**SCRUTINY REVIEW of PREPARATIONS FOR
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE IN WIRRAL**

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2014

Wirral welcomes you in 2014

A report produced by
**THE ECONOMY & REGENERATION
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PREPARATIONS FOR
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE
IN WIRRAL**

SCRUTINY REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel Members have gained an understanding of the enormous effort that has taken place in order to put Wirral in the position where significant and lasting inward investment is a real possibility. The International Trade Centre (ITC) is due to open during 2014 which will hopefully provide the impetus for further investment in the wider Wirral Waters project. With that investment will come jobs. The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning, Kevin Adderley, has led the team on behalf of the Council which has worked with the lead partners, Peel Holdings and Sam Wa International. The Panel Members fully recognise the contribution of that team. During this Scrutiny Review, it has also been pointed out that the cross-party political support for the concept of the International Trade Centre has been crucial in providing the platform for effective decision-making to take place. The Peel Group has formed a partnership with a Chinese company, Sam Wa International, to deliver the ITC. The contribution of the Council's two partners in the development is also recognised and welcomed. The Panel Members believe that the ITC is a good news story for Wirral.

What is the International Trade Centre? - The purpose of the ITC will be to facilitate the promotion and sales of goods to the wholesale market of the UK and the rest of Europe. The Trade Centre will enable up to 1,000 separate companies from China, India, South Korea or other emerging economies to exhibit, sell, assemble and distribute their goods into the UK, Irish and European market. The International Trade Centre will be based on a series of four buildings with a total floor space of 230,000 square metres (2,500,000 square feet). It will be constructed on land at West Float, Birkenhead. The first of the four buildings, Phase 1, will be 600,000 square feet in size and is expected to provide a base for up to 300 new overseas businesses. Ground clearance has already commenced and Phase 1 of the development is scheduled to open during 2014.

Should the ITC be a priority for the Council? - Panel Members are aware of the extreme financial conditions which currently face the Council and understand that budget savings must be made. Difficult decisions will be needed. However, the Council's Corporate Plan states that "Creating and safeguarding jobs and attracting new investment" is one of the leading priorities. The International Trade Centre provides Wirral with an enormous opportunity. As well as welcoming many overseas companies to the Borough, there is the possibility of over 2000 jobs being created for UK-based employees. Furthermore, there is the prospect that the ITC could provide the impetus for further investment and job creation in the longer term through the Wirral Waters project. The Panel Members have, therefore, concluded that the success of the ITC should be considered to be a high priority for the Authority and that this should be reflected in the Council's budgetary process.

This Report provides a view of the current position of the Council's part in the ITC project. However, the project is developing and requirements will change. It is, therefore, necessary that the Council is able to adapt to and support those changing requirements. Due to the high profile of the ITC project, the Panel Members propose that a member-led Working Group should be formed to support that process. There are many unknowns relating to the planning for the project. As tenants for Phase 1 of the project are still being acquired, the nature of the companies plus the numbers of overseas employees and family members moving to Wirral remain unknown. Therefore, detailed planning remains difficult.

What are the needs of businesses in the ITC? - Evidence gathered during the Review suggests that the majority of business needs of the ITC tenants will be met through Peel Holdings. A management team, provided by Peel, will be permanently situated within the ITC complex. This in-house Peel team will permanently manage the site and be available to talk to the tenants. In addition, Invest Wirral already provides a highly regarded service to Wirral-based businesses. It is anticipated that any specific business support which is required from the Council will be provided through that channel. Once further planning has taken place, a view will need to be taken on the capacity of the core team at Invest Wirral to take on any additional workload.

What support will be required for employees from overseas? - The support needs for companies and their employees are likely to differ depending on individual needs. However, evidence emerged during the Review of backing for the establishment of 'soft landing' support. The concept is based upon the provision of a single point of contact to assist employees in making arrangements, for example, with accommodation and school requirements. It is likely that much of the support will result in sign-posting to relevant organisations for services which may, in some cases, already exist. At this stage, the precise requirements are uncertain. Once companies have become established as tenants of the ITC, these requirements will become clearer and will enable further detailed planning to take place.

In addition to the 'soft-landing' support, it is proposed that a detailed information pack is produced. It appears that much useful information is already available but needs to be coordinated in a centralised form. Although a limited amount of material may be required in hard copy, it is proposed that the majority of the information should be made available on websites or via download and that at least some should be translated into major alternative languages.

The point was made by several witnesses that the personal welcome from work colleagues and neighbours is very important. For newcomers to the UK, personal contact will be critical and it is, therefore, suggested that a team of volunteers could be assembled to show newcomers what it is like to be British by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. The Panel Members are, therefore, proposing the formation of a group of UK-based volunteers, 'International Welcomers', acting as cultural ambassadors, to showcase British food and culture. It is also important that the existing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Wirral, including the Chinese community, are given the opportunity to act as ambassadors and buddies to the new arrivals.

What are the opportunities for Wirral businesses? - From the perspective of Wirral businesses, the biggest advantage of the International Trade Centre will be the many major businesses and business people on the doorstep. This will open up opportunities to trade. Equally, there will be some opportunities for service industries that will arise. Further work needs to be done to identify those opportunities which may be suitable for Wirral businesses. Invest Wirral currently hosts networks for Wirral-based businesses, delivered via the BusinessWirral.com website. It is suggested that once the new opportunities arising from the ITC are identified, these are discussed further within the Business Forums / networks. Opportunities for businesses to apply for 'preferred partner' status for the ITC may also arise. As a result, it may be possible for workshops to be provided, aimed at business people providing services such as car hire and hotels to help alleviate language and cultural barriers.

How can cultural links be developed and celebrated? - The International Business Festival, which is being led by Liverpool, but of which Wirral is a partner, is due to be held in July 2014. This will hopefully coincide approximately with the opening of the ITC. Although the Business Festival is not a cultural event in itself, it will, however, provide the opportunity for cultural events such as dragon boat racing to run alongside and to promote cultural issues. This will be a great opportunity to showcase different communities to the rest of Wirral. It is worth noting that the meetings held during this Review revealed very low knowledge amongst those participants regarding the twinning arrangements that are in place with Wirral Council.

There are organisations in Wirral that work directly with the BME communities. Among these groups are Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation, both of whom provide a rich resource for the Borough. As the detailed planning for the 'soft-landing' takes place, it may well be that such community groups will be well placed to provide some of the services that will be required when the overseas employees arrive at the ITC. The Council will need to be clear on those requirements. From the Council's perspective, although there are a number of contracts already in place with both organisations, the precise detail of all of those contracts was not clear to the Panel Members. The relationship between the Council and these organisations also did not appear to be on an outcome-led basis. It is, therefore, suggested that a review should take place to identify a clear understanding of the current contractual arrangements, explore the future requirements and create an environment where greater emphasis is placed on measurable outcomes of the services provided.

What are the implications of the ITC for education? - As the lead investors are Chinese, it is fair to assume that, although not exclusively so, the initial wave of tenants in the ITC will include a proportion of Chinese companies. Although employees arriving from China are likely to be English speakers, this may not necessarily be the case with family members. In addition, the ITC may provide job opportunities for Wirral people. The ability to communicate in Mandarin may well be a useful skill for future job seekers.

Teaching of Mandarin is already available across a number of schools in Wirral. The language is already taught at Calday Grange Grammar School and Upton Hall School. The experience of Calday Grange Grammar School is of particular interest, where the school has become established as an Advanced Confucius Classroom, a status recognised by the Chinese Government authorities. Within the school, 40 pupils have studied Mandarin to GCSE Level in 2011/12. The Confucius Classroom also provides the resource to teach Mandarin in primary schools, aimed at children in Year 2 upwards. Chinese language, culture, arts and crafts are already taught in 25 primary schools in Wirral via this outreach arrangement. With regard to other schools, in the future, it is possible that the increasing use of the English Baccalaureate will lead to more teaching of languages as the Baccalaureate requires an A*-C in a foreign language. However, in the past, changing the curriculum has not happened quickly.

Planning will need to take place regarding the education requirements of children moving to Wirral from overseas as a result of the Trade Centre opening. The current school admission policy is lengthy. It will, therefore, be necessary to address issues relating to the timing and the length of the schools' admission process when employees and their families may arrive at relatively short notice. It is also likely that schools are not yet widely aware of the International Trade Centre and the implications for education. As an example, the business needs of companies operating in the ITC will create new jobs, which may require some new skills including language skills. It is, therefore, suggested that an awareness process takes place with the schools in the Borough.

If family members arrive in Wirral with little English language knowledge, it should be the case that existing services will be in place to support those families and children. The MEAS service (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) is a well-established service in Wirral, being part of the Council's Children and Young People's Department. The MEAS team was formerly funded by a Direct Government Grant to the Council. However, the grant is now allocated directly to schools. A review has recently taken place regarding the future requirements of schools. Final decisions will be made in January 2013. It will be important that the MEAS team is able to demonstrate its worth to the schools across the Borough to guarantee continued support from as many schools as possible in order to maintain the funding.

What about Council officers and Members? - During this Review, it has been made clear that those UK citizens associated with the ITC project who have visited China have been made to feel extremely welcome. It is important that visiting delegations from China and other countries are made to feel equally welcome. This is of particular relevance to the Council when delegations are visiting municipal buildings, such as Wallasey Town Hall or Birkenhead Town Hall. Relatively small measures, such as a welcome in the language of the visitors can make a difference. Equally, Council officers should do what they can to understand and respond positively to challenges arising from cultural differences. It is important that potential inward investors are shown priority and, therefore, unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided wherever possible.

The Panel Members also agreed that it would be helpful if a larger cohort of Council Members had a greater understanding of the vision for the International Trade Centre and beyond. It is suggested that informal meetings with Lindsey Ashworth of Peel Holdings in addition to the appointment of an ITC Champion would help to raise the profile of the ITC project among the Members.

In considering the evidence found during the Review, the Panel Members have formulated the recommendations identified on pages 6 to 8.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 – The International Trade Centre as a Council priority

The International Trade Centre is recognised as a great opportunity for the Borough and consequently is a high priority for the Council. Despite the extreme financial conditions faced by the Authority, the preparations for the Trade Centre should formally be reflected as a high priority within the Council's budgetary process.

(Reference Section 5.2, page 14)

Recommendation 2 – Relationships

The Panel Members urge that strong consideration be given to ensure a consistent and relational-based approach is maintained with regard to the existing partners engaged in the ITC project.

(Reference Section 5.2, page 14)

Recommendation 3 – Creation of a member-led Working Group to oversee the delivery of the Trade Centre project

Due to the high profile of the International Trade Centre project, a member-led Working Group should be created to oversee the implementation of the recommendations from this Scrutiny Review and, in the longer term, the delivery of the ITC project from the Council's perspective.

(Reference Section 5.2, page 15)

Recommendation 4 - The gathering of corporate and individual requirements from prospective tenants

As soon as tenants for the International Trade Centre have been recruited, Wirral Council and Peel Holdings should work together to determine the corporate and individual requirements of those who will be moving to Wirral. The resulting information will inform social needs, such as for housing and education, and will enable more detailed planning to take place.

(Reference Section 5.2, page 15)

Recommendation 5 – Official opening of the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre will create the greatest concentration of foreign-owned businesses in the UK and will provide a major boost to the economy in Wirral and the Liverpool City Region. To mark an event of significance to the UK economy, consideration should be given to an invitation being made to a member of the Royal Family and/or a senior Government figure to open the Trade Centre.

(Reference Section 5.2, page 15)

Recommendation 6 – Provision of information regarding opportunities for existing Wirral businesses

The opportunities arising from the International Trade Centre for existing Wirral businesses can best be disseminated by use of the existing Wirral Business Forums, which are already coordinated by Invest Wirral on BusinessWirral.com. Consideration should be given to the creation of a preferred partners' list for the International Trade Centre. Wirral businesses could be given the opportunity to apply for 'preferred partner' status for a range of services from taxis to hotels. In return, appropriate training in language, cultural and business etiquette could be offered to such businesses.

(Reference Section 5.3, page 16)

Recommendation 7 – 'Soft-landing' support

Consideration should be given to establishing a Council-led 'soft-landing' support team which will be available to those companies and employees relocating from overseas to Wirral. In due course, further to the determination of exact requirements, a report should be produced for Cabinet to explain the purpose and proposed delivery of the support. The required support is likely to provide sign-posting for issues such as:

- Accommodation
- Education and schools
- Health issues
- Information on NHS provision and medical insurance
- Preferred partners for insurance

- Police registration (for visa requirements)
- Point of contact with the 'International Welcomer' volunteers
- Recruitment of staff for the new companies
- Driving instruction
- Cultural advice and support
- General queries and advice

The increased business rates which will be available to Wirral Council as a result of Enterprise Zone status could be used to facilitate the 'soft-landing' support team. Such a team would be time-limited based around the need to manage the significant influx of new residents and ensure they have the best possible start to their new life on the Wirral. All of our investigation points to the importance of relational-based support within eastern cultures.

(Reference Section 5.4, page 17)

Recommendation 8 – Information Pack

An Information Pack will be produced. The Pack will provide practical information and will be available to newcomers and those planning to move to Wirral. The information should be available primarily via a website. Consideration should also be given to the development of a Wirral App from which relevant information could be downloaded. The Information Pack will be translated into major alternative languages, for example, Mandarin.

(Reference Section 5.4, page 18)

Recommendation 9 – The 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers

An 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers should be created to provide new arrivals from overseas with British cultural experiences while showcasing Wirral. The volunteer team will enable new arrivals to be familiarised with British culture by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. The 'International Welcomer' team should include the recruitment of students / families of Wirral schools who teach languages such as Mandarin. This will enable those students to have the opportunity to improve their language skills at the same time as providing a valuable service.

(Reference Section 5.4, page 18)

Recommendation 10 – Birkenhead Town Hall and environs

As Birkenhead Town Hall is likely to be the base for Peel's marketing team in Wirral, it is important that steps are taken by Wirral Council to create a secure, safe and welcoming environment for the many overseas visitors who are likely to visit. This would be enhanced by the Council supporting the introduction of a 'Friends of Hamilton Square' Group.

(Reference Section 5.4, page 18)

Recommendation 11 – Awareness-raising of the benefits to Wirral of the International Trade Centre

The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to work closely with Peel Holdings in order to stress the positive aspects of the International Trade Centre for Wirral's residents.

(Reference Section 5.6, page 20)

Recommendation 12 – Events to celebrate cultural diversity

In order to celebrate Wirral's cultural diversity, both large and small-scale cultural events should be held in Wirral to coincide with the International Business Festival and to celebrate the opening of the International Trade Centre. The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to ensure that Wirral's BME communities, Neighbourhood Forums and young people, particularly through schools, play a central role in the planning of these events. The successful model of the community-based Big Lunches could be used to encourage cultural street parties throughout the Borough.

(Reference Section 5.7, page 20)

Recommendation 13 – Review of services provided by Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change

The contribution of both Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change to residents in Wirral is recognised and welcomed. However, further clarity regarding the expectations of both the Council and these partners relating to service provision and funding would be beneficial. Therefore, a full service review, including current contractual arrangements, should be undertaken. The review should lead to a greater emphasis on measurable outcomes for the services provided.

(Reference Section 5.7, page 21)

Recommendation 14 – Volunteering opportunities

Consideration should be given to ways of involving the family members of those newly-arrived overseas employees in the life of Wirral. This will involve the encouragement of volunteering among those family members in projects such as the MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) Volunteering Scheme and opportunities with Wirral Multicultural Organisation, Wirral Change and the wider voluntary sector.

(Reference Section 5.7, page 21)

Recommendation 15 – The awareness of the International Trade Centre within schools

The Director of Children and Young People's Department is requested to raise awareness of the International Trade Centre with headteachers and school governors regarding:

- The possibility of a number of new students arriving throughout the academic year;
- New job opportunities which may arise in Wirral, particularly for those with the right skills, including relevant language knowledge. Consideration should be given to ensuring that required skills for jobs in the ITC influence the development of the curriculum;
- Opportunities for schools to get involved in the cultural events being planned to coincide with the International Business Festival and the opening of the International Trade Centre. (See Recommendation 12)

(Reference Section 5.8, page 23)

Recommendation 16 – Awareness of the Council's Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS)

The Director of Children and Young People's Department is requested to ensure that all schools are made fully aware of the potential increase in the number of children from overseas arriving in Wirral and the potential impact on the Council's Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS). The Schools Forum may be a helpful mechanism.

(Reference Section 5.8, page 24)

Recommendation 17 – A warm welcome in Wirral

Delegations from overseas must be made to feel welcome in Wirral and especially at Council buildings, including Wallasey Town Hall. An appropriate visible welcome should be provided including cultural displays which may present the opportunity for school involvement.

(Reference Section 5.9, page 25)

Recommendation 18 – Members' meetings with Lindsey Ashworth

Opportunities should be explored to give all Council members the opportunity to meet and discuss relevant issues with the Development Director of Peel Holding, Lindsey Ashworth.

(Reference Section 5.9, page 25)

Recommendation 19 – Appointment of an ITC Champion

Wirral Council should appoint an ITC Champion to help increase the profile of the International Trade Centre within the Council and to help plan for the Council's involvement in the successful delivery of the project.

(Reference Section 5.9, page 25)

2. COMMENTS FROM PANEL MEMBERS

Councillor Mark Johnston (Chair)



It is not over dramatic to say that the International Trade Centre presents itself as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Wirral. Peel's commitment, investment and vision have found a willing partner in the Council who are ready to embrace a golden opportunity. A significant influx of developing market companies has the potential to create sustainable employment, provide opportunities for existing Wirral businesses and attract visitors from all over the world. It could also unlock vital investment to turn the dream of Wirral Waters into bricks and mortar and see the re-birth of a once thriving hub of enterprise.

Increased Business Rates, increased demand for housing, the added purchasing power of new residents, improving our GVA (Gross Value Added), growing a reputation as a great place to do business, regeneration impacting on our key deprivation issues such as child poverty and unemployment, investment into the east of the Borough and richer cultural diversity are just a few of the value added benefits of the ITC.

One of the most impressive things about the ITC and Wirral Waters is the total unity that the project has inspired. The far-sighted decisions to invest into relationships and not skimp on this development are a credit to several former leaders of the Council and key Council officers.

As a community we stand on the brink of something with the potential to positively impact the whole of the Borough. The Council must be the community leader on this project and we should be rightly proud and be bold in telling everyone the good news of the ITC.

This story of hope and potential is taking place against a back drop of worldwide recession, national budget cuts and a set of challenges facing local government that is unprecedented. It is truly remarkable that this development is taking place given the back drop! Therefore, it is imperative that we continue to embrace this opportunity even if that means a short-term investment to make sure that Wirral is ready to grab hold of every opportunity presented. Losing our nerve at this late hour and failing to continue with investment is surely not an option.

Councillor Andrew Hodson



I am delighted to have been associated with the Panel in working towards building a social and economic foundation and ensuring a Wirral welcome for those who will be involved and working within the Trade Centre.

This is an exciting time for Wirral and I know that Wirral Council is committed to working in partnership with Peel Holdings to ensure that Wirral Waters will be a resounding success.

Councillor Jean Stapleton



It is remarkable that Peel Holdings in partnership with Wirral Borough Council have continued to drive the development of the International Trade Centre despite the recession. It has the potential to stimulate the local economy, assist businesses to grow and to provide new job opportunities for Wirral residents.

All parties in Wirral have put their political differences aside to ensure the smooth passage of this project through all the planning and development processes. This in itself shows the level of importance given and the determination of everyone in the Council to ensure the project's delivery.

The recommendations made in this Report are made against a backdrop of unprecedented financial challenges facing the Council. It is my hope that Officers will be able to use sources of funding outside the core budget in order to finance the recommendations made wherever possible.

3. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF

At the meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 7th June 2012, members agreed to undertake an in-depth Scrutiny Review to produce an informed response to the Notice of Motion that was approved by Council on 16th April 2012. The Notice of Motion, which was agreed unanimously, stated:

That:

1) Council recognises that all political parties have consistently worked in true political partnership to support the Wirral Waters project. This unified approach has assisted Peel in the development of this project and helped to attract significant and further potential Chinese and other investors.

(2) Council also recognises the outstanding input from key Officers to ensure that Wirral is presenting itself as a highly attractive investment partner and destination.

(3) Council is encouraged to see that Peel have secured and match funded £1.3 million of Government funds to start preparing the ITC site, with land remediation works already underway, and that recent visits by delegations from China were highly successful in presenting the Trade Centre site as an attractive location for potential tenants, with a further delegation expected in April.

(4) Council now calls for work to "prepare the ground" for Wirral to be Trade Centre Ready, so that Wirral and its residents and businesses are in the best possible position to embrace all the potential business opportunities that will come and that we can offer the best possible support to businesses and investors that come here, to ensure the ITC is a long term success.

(5) Work needs to be undertaken to ensure Wirral is ready, particularly in the following areas:

(i). Trade, export, marketing and inward investment

(ii). Employment and skills

(iii). Education, including languages and training

(iv). Culture and development of longer term links with China, Korea, India and other countries likely to develop significant future business links with Wirral.

(6) Council therefore calls on the three Parties to agree membership for a 1:1:1 Member Working Party, reporting to the Economy and Regeneration OSC. This Working Party will scope a project leading to recommendations to ensure this Council and its partners are Trade Centre Ready and able to embrace all opportunities for development through its growing links with China and other countries and that potential barriers to businesses and investors are identified and recommendations made as to how these can be overcome.

(7) Council requests that the Working Party completes this work in time to enable any recommendations to be implemented before the ITC is built and opens for business and so that recommendations have enough time to be considered for the setting of 2013/14 budget, as appropriate.

(8) Council also requests that the first meeting of the Working Party receive a report updating on progress in relation to paragraph 3 of the previous Notice of Motion on this topic (Minute 53, 17 October 2012 Council refers).

Subsequent to the Committee meeting in June, the Panel Members proposed that the Review should consider a number of key areas. The Scope Document for the Scrutiny Review, attached as Appendix 1 to this Report, was agreed by the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2012. It was agreed that the Review would concentrate on the following issues:

- What is the provision of local services available to Wirral companies as they prepare to trade with new companies and emerging markets?
- How can inward investors be made to feel most welcome in Wirral?
- What are the business support needs of companies operating in the International Trade Centre?
- How is the International Trade Centre to be marketed and what role can the Council play?
- How can cultural links be developed?
- What are the issues regarding language and education barriers / opportunities?
- What needs to be done to ensure adequate cultural awareness and training among Council officers and members?

4. METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW

The Panel has employed a number of methods to gather evidence:

4.1 Meetings with relevant organisations

A series of visits has taken place at which the Panel Members could discuss relevant issues with representatives of organisations external to the Council, including some members of the voluntary and community sector. All of the visits were very constructive and highlighted issues relevant to the Review. Those visited during the course of the Review were:

Peel Holdings

- Lindsey Ashworth, Development Director

Calday Grange Grammar School

- Mark Rodaway, Headteacher
- Jacqui McIver, Confucius Classroom Coordinator
- Geoff Bosworth, Confucius Classroom Manager
- Lisa Wang, Head of Chinese Studies
- Janey Xie, Hanban Teacher
- Juan Qui , Hanban Teacher

Wirral Multicultural Organisation

- Raza Moula, Chief Executive
- Mindy Rutherford, Office Manager
- Kazi Ahmed, Chair
- Steve Tam, Treasurer
- Shyamal Mukherjee, Board Member
- Van Tran, Board Member
- Shanti Saagar, Board Member
- Councillor Brian Kenny, Board Member

Wirral Change

- Clint Agard, Chief Executive

4.2 Meetings with Officers

A series of individual meetings has taken place at which the Panel Members could discuss relevant issues with key officers from Wirral Borough Council. In addition, Kevin Adderley, Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning provided advice to the Panel Members during both the initial planning stage and the closing phase of the Review. Those interviewed during the course of the Review were:

Wirral Borough Council

- Emma Degg, Head of Communications and Community Engagement
- Jacqui Cross, Corporate Equality & Cohesion Manager
- Paula Basnett, Senior Investment Manager, Invest Wirral
- Maud Duthie, International Business Manager, Invest Wirral
- Alan Evans, Strategic Investment Manager
- Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager, Secondary Education
- Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager, Primary Education
- Phil Sheridan, Headteacher consultant - Secondary
- Steve Dainty, Headteacher consultant - Primary
- Sarah Howarth, Manager, MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) / Lifelong Learning
- Avril McCarthy, EAL (English as an Additional Language) Consultant

5. EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The concept of the International Trade Centre

The purpose of the ITC will be to facilitate the promotion and sales of goods to the wholesale market of the UK and the rest of Europe. The Trade Centre will enable up to 1,000 separate companies from China, India, South Korea or other emerging economies to exhibit, sell, assemble and distribute their goods into the UK, Irish and European market. Resembling a trading post, the ITC will enable international companies to build relationships with European wholesale buyers who will use the facility for their purchasing needs. UK and European buyers will be able to place orders directly with companies in the ITC and have goods delivered either to the ITC or to their final destination. It is anticipated that some companies will choose to operate warehousing and assembly facilities close to the Trade Centre. The ITC will be open to tradespeople; not the general public.

It is intended that the ITC will form an initial part of the Wirral Waters project which, in turn, forms part of the Ocean Gateway project which stretches from Manchester to Liverpool along the line of the Manchester Ship Canal. At the western end of the Ocean Gateway are the two proposed high rise property developments, Liverpool Waters and Wirral Waters which focus on developing the Liverpool waterfront and surrounding the River Mersey docklands. The ITC site is adjacent to the proposed Wirral Waters development.

The Peel Group has formed a partnership with a Chinese company, Sam Wa International, to deliver the ITC. Significant effort has been made to secure clients for the Trade Centre among Chinese companies, including those in Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Suzhou and Jiang Yin. Relationships are now being built with Indian businesses based in Mumbai and Delhi.

It is proposed that the ITC will be based on a series of four buildings with a total floor space of 230,000 square metres (2,500,000 square feet). It will be constructed on land at West Float, Birkenhead. The first of the four buildings, Phase 1, will be 600,000 square feet in size and is expected to provide a base for up to 300 new overseas businesses. Each of the four buildings will be split over two floors. Each building will comprise individual trade showroom units, serviced offices, conference suites, a management suite and an exhibition space, as well as cafés and restaurants.

The ITC will include a dedicated management team who will manage the on-going running and maintenance of the building as well as other aspects such as security and cleaning. The management team will also provide dedicated marketing expertise which will aim to raise awareness of the ITC in the UK and Europe. It is intended that tenants of the ITC will bring both a good track record in business plus high quality products. These criteria will result in obtaining good tenants with the right products. There will also be a good mix of products which will cover all sectors and business lines including but not restricted to electrical items, textiles & clothing, kitchenware, furniture, fixtures, fittings and building materials.

Construction of Phase 1 of the development has already started with ground remediation works. The indicative timetable for the remainder of the project is:

- 2012 Talking to prospective tenants and securing tenants
- Oct – Dec 2012 Reserved matters planning application
- Feb 2012 – Jan 2013 Decontamination of Phases 1 and 2 land
- Spring 2013 – Spring 2014 Construction
- Spring 2014 Open for business

5.2 Budget and organisational Issues

Panel Members are aware of the extreme financial conditions which currently face the Council and understand that budget savings must be made, leading to some difficult decisions. However, this does not mean that equal savings should be made across all departments and service areas. There is no doubt that the International Trade Centre provides Wirral with an enormous opportunity. As well as welcoming many overseas companies to the Borough, there is the possibility of over 2000 jobs being created for UK-based employees. Furthermore, there is the prospect that the ITC could provide the impetus for further investment and job creation in the longer term through the Wirral Waters project. Wirral currently has the lowest job density ratio in the Liverpool City Region with 57 jobs per 100 residents. Job creation is also pivotal in the delivery of some other Council priorities such as the Child Poverty Strategy. It is, therefore, in the Council's interests that the ITC becomes a huge success. The Council's Corporate Plan for 2012/13 has already established the following as priority areas for 'The Economy' in Wirral:

"We will position Wirral as a leading vibrant global location for businesses and visitors. We will continue to support international trade links and develop our relationships with the private sector, to maximise inward investment and enable Wirral businesses to access new markets, sectors and opportunities, including those available locally".

"We will work hard to deliver all of the opportunities presented by the Wirral Waters Development".

Indeed, in his Foreword and Vision section of the Corporate Plan, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Phil Davies, identifies five of the Administration's immediate policy priorities. One of these is "Creating and safeguarding jobs and attracting new investment". The Panel Members have, therefore, concluded that the success of the ITC should be considered to be a high priority for the Authority and that this should be reflected in the Council's budgetary process.

Recommendation 1 – The International Trade Centre as a Council priority

The International Trade Centre is recognised as a great opportunity for the Borough and consequently is a high priority for the Council. Despite the extreme financial conditions faced by the Authority, the preparations for the Trade Centre should be reflected as a high priority within the Council's budgetary process.

Throughout this Scrutiny Review, Panel Members have been repeatedly told by external partners of the value placed on relationships with the Council. Several key officers and political figures have been the driving force for the Council during the development of the ITC project. Changes in key personnel at this late stage of the project should be viewed as high risk.

Recommendation 2 – Relationships

The Panel Members urge that strong consideration be given to ensure a consistent and relational-based approach is maintained with regard to the existing partners engaged in the ITC project.

This Report provides a view of the current position of the Council's part in the ITC project. However, the project is developing and requirements will change. It is, therefore, necessary that the Council is able to adapt to and support those changing requirements. Due to the high profile of the ITC project, the Panel Members propose that a member-led Working Group should be formed to support that process. The purpose of the Working Group is to initially monitor the progress of the recommendations from this Report but, in the longer term, to provide strategic leadership in the delivery of the ITC project from the Council's perspective.

Recommendation 3 – Creation of a member-led Working Group to oversee the delivery of the Trade Centre project

Due to the high profile of the International Trade Centre project, a member-led Working Group should be created to oversee the implementation of the recommendations from this Scrutiny Review and, in the longer term, the delivery of the ITC project from the Council's perspective.

The numbers of overseas employees and family members moving to Wirral is unknown at present. The working assumption is that there will be at least one overseas employee for each company operating from within the ITC. However, it will be necessary to know the numbers and types of businesses that are likely to be moving in order to commence detailed planning of requirements on a corporate level. Similarly, there is no information available yet regarding the type of individuals and families who will be arriving. As this is a completely new model for business in the UK, there is no previous experience on which to base any predictions. Such information is very important to enable planning, for example, of school places and of accommodation requirements. The availability of such information will have implications for the success of other recommendations detailed later in this Report, such as the availability of 'soft-landing' support for the newcomers to Wirral (see Recommendation 7). In return, as part of the planning process, there is also a need to provide information to the employees of overseas companies regarding key dates, for example, with the schools' admission process.

Recommendation 4 - The gathering of corporate and individual requirements from prospective tenants

As soon as tenants for the International Trade Centre have been recruited, Wirral Council and Peel Holdings should work together to determine the corporate and individual requirements of those who will be moving to Wirral. The resulting information will inform social needs, such as for housing and education, and will enable more detailed planning to take place.

As has been stated earlier, the emergence of the International Trade Centre will give the local economy a boost as well as raise the profile of Wirral on the global stage. The success of the ITC will be of national significance given the anticipated level of inward investment. One of the recent criticisms of the Council has been that we are not willing enough to celebrate success nor ambitious enough in our approach. The Council's Self Assessment for the Corporate Peer Challenge, to be held in October 2012, points out that "What is also clear is that the organisation is unnecessarily defensive and is short of confidence". In order to celebrate the anticipated opening of the Trade Centre, consideration should, therefore, be given to making this a real flagship event.

Recommendation 5 – Official opening of the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre will create the greatest concentration of foreign-owned businesses in the UK and will provide a major boost to the economy in Wirral and the Liverpool City Region. To mark an event of significance to the UK economy, consideration should be given to an invitation being made to a member of the Royal Family and / or a senior Government figure to open the Trade Centre.

5.3 Opportunities for existing Wirral businesses

The biggest advantage of the ITC for Wirral's businesses is that, as one witness told the Panel Members:

"Business people will be on your doorstep".

Indeed, Wirral businesses will be able to take space in the ITC if it is commercially effective for them to do so. As it is anticipated that there will be opportunity for Wirral companies to trade through the ITC, equally there will be some opportunities for service industries that will arise. Further work needs

to be done to identify those opportunities which may be suitable for Wirral businesses. Invest Wirral currently hosts networks for Wirral-based businesses, delivered via the BusinessWirral.com website. It is suggested that, once the new opportunities arising from the ITC are identified, these are discussed further within the Business Forums.

BusinessWirral.com may be the perfect portal to ask local businesses for expressions of interest in becoming a preferred partner for the ITC. It is understood that, due to competitiveness rules, the Council will have to supply a minimum of three names. Furthermore, if there are preferred partners in particular sectors, those businesses could be given the opportunity to undertake some cultural training to enable them to provide a better service to overseas visitors. Clearly, it would be important that quality control and vetting of suppliers is part of that process. As one witness told the Panel Members:

“An effective business relationship relies on respect and cultural awareness”.

As a result, it may be possible for workshops to be provided, aimed at business people, providing services such as car hire and hotels to help to overcome language and cultural barriers. There may be an opportunity for some of the local schools and community groups to become involved in providing such training.

Recommendation 6 – Provision of information regarding opportunities for existing Wirral businesses

The opportunities arising from the International Trade Centre for existing Wirral businesses can best be disseminated by use of the existing Wirral Business Forums, which are already coordinated by Invest Wirral on BusinessWirral.com. Consideration should be given to the creation of a preferred partners' list for the International Trade Centre. Wirral businesses could be given the opportunity to apply for 'preferred partner' status for a range of services from taxis to hotels. In return, appropriate training in language, cultural and business etiquette could be offered to such businesses.

5.4 Making Inward Investors welcome

Although it is likely that employees of companies moving to Wirral will have an understanding of the English language, it is also important that adequate information is available for the new arrivals. A relatively recent arrival to the UK explained:

“It would be good to have all the relevant information on daily life in our own language, available in a welcome pack or handbook. Most business people might be interested in pages on the Wirral Council website such as education and housing. More detailed translation would be good”.

Another citizen from overseas agreed that:

“The availability of help with daily things is very important. Initially, it would be helpful to have more support available in the native language, for example, Mandarin, as it is very tiring to speak constantly in a foreign language”.

The support needs for companies and their employees are likely to differ depending on individual needs. However, evidence emerged during the review of backing for the establishment of 'soft landing' support. The concept is based upon the provision of a single point of contact to assist employees in making arrangements, for example with accommodation and school requirements. As the requirements of individuals and their families will vary, for example, the size and age of a family, it is, therefore, important that the support provided is not on a “one size fits all” basis. It is likely that much of the support will result in sign-posting to relevant organisations. At this stage, the precise requirements are uncertain. Once companies have become established as tenants of the ITC, these requirements will become clearer and will enable further detailed planning to take place. Nevertheless, advice and sign-posting will be required both during the period of planning to move and post-relocation on issues ranging from education to housing to health. It is suggested that many of those support services already exist, some provided by organisations such as Wirral Multicultural

Organisation and Wirral Change. Sign-posting to those existing services will be part of the solution. When describing existing services for the BME communities, one witness told the Panel Members: “There is no need to re-invent the wheel”.

There may also be opportunities to make use of existing translation services which are present within community groups and schools. Indeed, it is understood that funding has been made available to create a hub for a multi-racial translation service. It is planned that, in two years’ time, there will be a hub set up to provide translation into 15 languages. The hub will include agencies such as Wirral Change, WMO, Irish Community Care Merseyside (ICCM), Wired and Advocacy in Wirral. In addition, there are language skills available in a number of local schools including Calday Grange Grammar School.

Central to a successful ‘soft-landing’ will be effective communication. Therefore, prior to moving, it will be important that information is shared from the host company in, for example, China. Equally, the ‘soft-landing’ team will also need to have good links within the Council and across other agencies in order to provide a coordinated service. Cultural understanding of the potential tenants will also be important. In summary, one witness concluded:

“There is a need for a friendly base camp here, where good information is available at the time of the first phone call”.

During the review, the example of driving licences was cited as an example where good advice will be necessary to counter cultural barriers. If someone is moving from outside the EU, they will need to change their driving licence within a year. This may necessitate driving lessons. In turn, this may provide opportunities for local businesses, as discussed earlier in Section 5.3. Access to the National Health Service is another example where additional advice will be required.

Recommendation 7 – ‘Soft-landing’ support

Consideration should be given to establishing a Council-led ‘soft-landing’ support team which will be available to those companies and employees relocating from overseas to Wirral. In due course, further to the determination of exact requirements, a report should be produced for Cabinet to explain the purpose and proposed delivery of the support. The required support is likely to provide sign-posting for issues such as:

- Accommodation
- Education and schools
- Health issues
- Information on NHS provision and medical insurance
- Preferred partners for insurance
- Police registration (for visa requirements)
- Point of contact with the ‘International Welcomer’ volunteers
- Recruitment of staff for the new companies
- Driving instruction
- Cultural advice and support
- General queries and advice

The increased business rates which will be available to Wirral Council as a result of Enterprise Zone status could be used to facilitate the ‘soft-landing’ support team. Such a team would be time limited based around the need to manage the significant influx of new residents and ensure they have the best possible start to their new life on the Wirral. All of our investigation points to the importance of relational-based support within eastern cultures.

In addition to the ‘soft-landing’ support, it is proposed that a detailed information pack is produced. It is understood that Peel is assembling an information pack which includes information such as schools and GPs. It is clearly important that Wirral Council does not duplicate the work that is already being undertaken by Peel. It appears that much useful information is already available but needs to be coordinated in a centralised form. As an example, there is already a significant amount of material available on the MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) section of the Wirral Council website.

Although a limited amount of material may be required in hard copy, it is suggested that the main objective is to provide information on websites or available via download. During the Review, it was suggested that an App could be made available to describe the features of Wirral which would be most useful to those newcomers moving with the new companies. Although, an App called AroundMe is already available for iPhones, this provides information relevant to the user's location and allows the nearest facilities to be selected. Information is available on that App in different languages including Mandarin.

Recommendation 8 – Information Pack

An Information Pack will be produced. The Pack will provide practical information and will be available to newcomers and those planning to move to Wirral. The information should be available primarily via a website. Consideration should also be given to the development of a Wirral App from which relevant information could be downloaded. The Information Pack will be translated into major alternative languages, for example, Mandarin.

The point was made by several witnesses that the personal welcome from work colleagues and neighbours is very important. For newcomers to the UK, personal contact will be critical and it is, therefore, suggested that a team of volunteers could be assembled to show newcomers what it is like to be British by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. During this Scrutiny Review, discussion took place regarding the possibility of forming a group of UK-based volunteers, acting as cultural ambassadors, to showcase British food and culture. It is also important that the existing BME communities in Wirral, including the Chinese community, are given the opportunity to act as ambassadors and buddies to the new arrivals. It is possible that the organisation of that team could be led by an existing voluntary group(s). There appeared to be strong support, particularly among the voluntary and community sector, for the proposal to create an 'International Welcomer' team. In addition, it would be particularly advantageous for schools to become involved in the process. The recruitment of students / families of Wirral schools who teach languages such as Mandarin would be especially beneficial. This will enable those students to have the opportunity to improve their language skills at the same time as providing a valuable service.

Recommendation 9 – The 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers

An 'International Welcomer' team of volunteers should be created to provide new arrivals from overseas with British cultural experiences while showcasing Wirral. The volunteer team will enable new arrivals to be familiarised with British culture by inviting them into their homes for a meal and escorting them on local visits. The 'International Welcomer' team should include the recruitment of students / families of Wirral schools who teach languages such as Mandarin. This will enable those students to have the opportunity to improve their language skills at the same time as providing a valuable service.

It is understood that there is a probability that Birkenhead Town Hall will be set up as a headquarters for the marketing of the ITC project in Wirral. This will result in a lot of overseas visitors making use of this facility. This resource will give an opportunity to demonstrate Wirral's history, culture, schools, leisure facilities and so on to the many anticipated visitors. It is, therefore, important that the Council does all that is possible to ensure that a safe, clean and welcoming environment is maintained in Hamilton Square. This is one way in which the commitment of the Council to the ITC project can be clearly demonstrated.

Recommendation 10 – Birkenhead Town Hall and environs

As Birkenhead Town Hall is likely to be the base for Peel's marketing team in Wirral, it is important that steps are taken by Wirral Council to create a secure, safe and welcoming environment for the many overseas visitors who are likely to visit. This would be enhanced by the Council supporting the introduction of a 'Friends of Hamilton Square' Group.

5.5 ITC business support needs

Evidence gathered during the Review suggests that the majority of business needs of the ITC tenants will be met through Peel Holdings. A management team, provided by Peel, will be permanently situated within the ITC complex. This in-house Peel team will permanently manage the site and be available to talk to the tenants.

Invest Wirral already provide a highly regarded service to Wirral-based businesses. It is anticipated that any specific business support which is required from the Council will be provided through that channel. However, once further planning has taken place, a view will need to be taken on the capacity of the core team at Invest Wirral to take on any additional workload. In terms of the existing business network support provided by Invest Wirral, which is delivered via the BusinessWirral.com website, it is possible that the new companies will want to join networks in the most relevant business sector. The existing business forums include manufacturing; financial & professional business services; maritime & logistics, tourism & retail, construction, environmental and another for digital / creative. At this stage, it is not anticipated that a separate forum will be required specifically for those companies operating within the International Trade Centre.

It is recognised that overseas companies moving into the International Trade Centre will require assistance with the recruitment of additional UK-based employees. Again, once the specific requirements of prospective tenants are known, further work will be required to establish how best this support can be provided. However, an initial view is that this support could be made available through the 'soft-landing' support (see Recommendation 7) providing an advisory and coordination role with respect to recruitment.

Anecdotal evidence demonstrated that it is currently difficult for some business people to obtain a UK visa in China. Indeed, one of the witnesses had a four week delay before arriving in the UK due to visa complications. This issue has been recognised by Peel Holdings, who are putting arrangements in place to alleviate the problem with regard to the International Trade Centre. Panel Members have concluded that there are no further actions that can be taken by the Council at this stage to ease this problem. However, the process of registration at a police station, which is specified on some visas, can be a difficult process for some new arrivals. It is suggested that advice on this process is made available through the 'soft-landing' support (see Recommendation 7) and the Information Pack (see Recommendation 8) described elsewhere in the Report.

5.6 Marketing

In relation to the International Trade Centre, a web-based pack is already available providing information such as accommodation and transport. The information is also available in Mandarin. The equivalent information is available within Peel's brochure for the ITC. Wirral Council is responsible for providing the content relating to the Borough for both print and web-based marketing material. The intention is to market the whole of Wirral; not just the ITC. However, Wirral Council is not directly responsible for the marketing in China. Peel Holdings and Sam Wa International are responsible for the marketing exercise that is currently underway in China and elsewhere. Information is available on three different websites:

InvestWirral.com	(Invest Wirral's inward investment site)
http://www.peeleez.co.uk/	(Peel's Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone site)
Peelitic.co.uk	(Peel's ITC site)

Sections of the peelitic.co.uk website are apparently available in Mandarin.

As stated earlier, it is intended that Birkenhead Town Hall is to be set up as a headquarters for the marketing of the project in Wirral. This will give an opportunity to demonstrate Wirral's history, culture and other facilities to the many overseas visitors who are expected to visit.

During the evidence-gathering stage of this Scrutiny Review, there was apparent excitement and enthusiasm for the ITC project. However, some concerns have been expressed regarding the potential impact that a sudden influx of migrants may have on the Borough. The Panel Members conclude that the International Trade Centre is a good news story. Nevertheless, it is important that the process is well planned and that the residents of Wirral are made fully aware of the benefits of the project to Wirral. It may be necessary to respond to accusations that "the Chinese are taking our jobs" with the true picture that the Chinese investment is creating new jobs. As the project develops, this can be achieved through greater presence of the ITC on the Council's website and in the local press.

Recommendation 11 – Awareness-raising of the benefits to Wirral of the International Trade Centre

The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to work closely with Peel Holdings in order to stress the positive aspects of the International Trade Centre for Wirral's residents.

5.7 Development of cultural links

The International Business Festival, which is being led by Liverpool, but of which Wirral is a partner will provide an opportunity to create a vision on both sides of the river. The festival, which is due to be held for a month in July 2014, will hopefully coincide approximately with the opening of the ITC. Although the Business Festival is not a cultural event in itself, it will, however, provide the opportunity for cultural events to run alongside and to promote cultural issues. This will be a great opportunity to showcase those communities to the rest of Wirral. As an example, it may be possible for dragon boat racing to be included as part of these events. Panel Members were informed that many schools in Wirral already celebrate such international festivals as Chinese New Year and Divali. There would appear to be a further opportunity to get schools and young people involved in the planning and execution of any events relating to the International Business Festival and the opening of the ITC. The evidence suggests that there would also be great enthusiasm from organisations such as Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation to become involved in such events. Indeed, it would be a great opportunity to link with existing businesses owned by BME communities and other local communities.

Recommendation 12 – Events to celebrate cultural diversity

In order to celebrate Wirral's cultural diversity, both large and small-scale cultural events should be held in Wirral to coincide with the International Business Festival and to celebrate the opening of the International Trade Centre. The Council's Head of Communications and Community Engagement is requested to ensure that Wirral's BME communities, Neighbourhood Forums and young people, particularly through schools, play a central role in the planning of these events. The successful model of the community-based Big Lunches could be used to encourage cultural street parties throughout the Borough.

The meetings held during this Review revealed very low knowledge amongst those participants regarding the twinning arrangements that are in place with Wirral Council. However, it is perhaps the schools that take the lead with their own twinning arrangements, some of which twin with towns and cities in emerging market countries, such as China and India. Indeed, as part of a Connecting Classroom project, which is supported by the British Council, a group of Chinese headteachers are due to visit some Wirral schools later in the year. This is part of a reciprocal arrangement which included a visit by a group of teachers from Wirral to China. It is noted that the Connecting

Classrooms project is linked to a different region of China and not to Suzhou and Taicang, with whom Wirral Council signed an agreement as part of the preparations for the ITC.

There are organisations in Wirral that aim to respond to the needs of the black and minority ethnic communities. Among these groups are Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation, who both provide a rich resource for the Borough. It is very much anticipated that these organisations will be well placed to provide some of the resource and support that will be required when the overseas employees arrive at the ITC. As the detailed planning for the 'soft-landing' takes place, as described in Section 5.4 above, it may well be that such community groups will be best placed to provide the required services. The Council will need to be clear on those requirements. While the work of Wirral Change focuses particularly on employment, work and training, it appears that there is some overlap in service provision, for example, with advice on health issues. During a meeting with Wirral Multicultural Organisation, one member described the organisation:

"WMO is a one stop shop for the BME community".

Meanwhile another added that:

"The WMO acts as a bridge to different communities"

From the Council's perspective, although there are a number of contracts in place with both organisations, the precise detail of all of those contracts was not clear to the Panel Members. The relationship between the Council and these organisations also did not appear to be on an outcome-based basis. It is, therefore, suggested that a review should take place to identify a clear understanding of the current contractual arrangements, explore the future requirements and create an environment where greater emphasis is placed on measurable outcomes of the services provided.

Recommendation 13 – Review of services provided by Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change

The contribution of both Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change to residents in Wirral is recognised and welcomed. However, further clarity regarding the expectations of both the Council and these partners relating to service provision and funding would be beneficial. Therefore, a full service review, including current contractual arrangements, should be undertaken. The review should lead to a greater emphasis on measurable outcomes for the services provided.

It is clear that there are many volunteering opportunities available in Wirral, often providing services to the BME communities. As has been stated previously, the family circumstances of those employees moving from overseas are currently uncertain. However, anecdotal evidence was found that as visa requirements may prevent family members from working, those additional family members may be a rich volunteering resource for community groups at the same time as preventing them from becoming isolated.

Recommendation 14 – Volunteering opportunities

Consideration should be given to ways of involving the family members of those newly-arrived overseas employees in the life of Wirral. This will involve the encouragement of volunteering among those family members in projects such as the MEAS (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) Volunteering Scheme and opportunities with Wirral Multicultural Organisation, Wirral Change and the wider voluntary sector.

5.8 Language and education

There are different levels in order to be 'language-ready', ranging from an ability to do business through to total immersion in a language. As the lead investors are Chinese, it is fair to assume that, although not exclusively so, the initial wave of tenants in the ITC will include a proportion of Chinese

companies. Although employees arriving from China are likely to be English speakers, this may not necessarily be the case with family members. In addition, the ITC may provide job opportunities for Wirral people. The ability to communicate in Mandarin may well be a useful skill for future job seekers.

Teaching of Mandarin is already available across a number of educational establishments in Wirral. The language is already taught at Calday Grange Grammar School and Upton Hall School. The experience of Calday Grange Grammar School is of particular interest. Six foreign languages are currently included on the curriculum at Calday Grammar, including Mandarin, Russian and Spanish. An increasing proportion of students at the school are studying Chinese and Russian. This enables the students to develop an understanding of the economic shift that is taking place in the world. Since 2007, the school has been an accredited Advanced Confucius Classroom. Working in partnership with Hanban¹, the Confucius Classroom status supports the teaching of Mandarin in a growing number of schools and to a growing number of young people. Hanban funding provides placements to support these school activities and also provides opportunities for schools to enter language-based competitions. As part of this initiative, Calday aims to support other schools, organisations and community groups in language teaching and learning and the study of China. As a "Hub School", Calday supports five "Spoke Schools" across the North West of England. There are approximately 2500 schools hosting a Confucius Centre globally.

The Confucius Classroom status enables Calday Grammar to welcome visiting Hanban teachers each year. They work at Calday as well as visiting other schools and organisations in the wider community, supporting the teaching of Chinese language and culture. From the Year 11 cohort of 180, 40 pupils have studied Mandarin to GCSE Level in 2011/12. Students also have an opportunity to study Mandarin to 'A' Level standard at Calday Grange. The Hanban team also provides the resource to teach Mandarin in primary schools, aimed at children in Year 2 upwards. Chinese language, culture, arts and crafts are already taught in 25 primary schools in Wirral via this outreach arrangement. Although this excellent work is taking place, it appears that there is not a coordinated Borough-wide long-term plan to teach language and culture in primary schools. In addition to the teaching in schools, there are facilities available in Wirral for the teaching of Mandarin to adults, including Wirral Grammar School for Girls at Bebington and Wirral Multicultural Organisation. The Panel Members hope that the ITC project will enable the further use of the facilities and talent that already exists in Wirral.

In the future, it is possible that the increasing use of the English Baccalaureate will lead to more teaching of languages as the Baccalaureate requires an A*-C in a foreign language. However, in the past, changing the curriculum has not happened quickly. It is, therefore, unlikely that additional languages will be taught across most schools in the short-term. In addition, evidence emerged that not many teachers are being trained in alternative languages. There is, therefore, a shortage of emerging-market language teachers and also a perceived shortage of teaching resources for these languages, for example, books.

There is a common school admission policy for all children, regardless of whether they are moving from abroad. The current process is lengthy, for example, the closing date for secondary school admissions in September 2013 is 31st October 2012. Long-term planning is a necessity. It will, therefore, be necessary to address issues relating to the timing and the length of the schools' admission process when employees and their families may arrive at relatively short notice.

It is likely that schools are not yet widely aware of the International Trade Centre and the implications for education. As an example, the business needs of companies operating in the ITC will create new jobs, which may require some new skills including language skills. Information is provided to potential sixth form students regarding priorities and opportunities at post-16. It is possible that information regarding the ITC could be included in that process. In the future, it is possible that the ITC could make those schools which include Mandarin on their curriculum appear more attractive to some

¹ Hanban is an abbreviation for Chinese National Office for teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Hanban supports the Confucius Institute program, of which Calday Grange Grammar School is a part.

students and their parents. It is, therefore, suggested that an awareness process takes place with the schools in the Borough.

Recommendation 15 – The awareness of the International Trade Centre within schools

The Director of Children and Young People’s Department is requested to raise awareness of the International Trade Centre with headteachers and school governors regarding:

- The possibility of a number of new students arriving throughout the academic year;
- New job opportunities which may arise in Wirral, particularly for those with the right skills, including relevant language knowledge. Consideration should be given to ensuring that required skills for jobs in the ITC influence the development of the curriculum;
- Opportunities for schools to get involved in the cultural events being planned to coincide with the International Business Festival and the opening of the International Trade Centre. (see Recommendation 12)

If family members arrive in Wirral with little English-language knowledge, it should be the case that existing services will be in place to support those families and children. The MEAS service (Minority Ethnic Achievement Service) is a well-established service in Wirral, being part of the Council’s Children and Young People’s Department. Some of the major services provided by MEAS include:

- Assessment of newly arrived pupils. The level of English is assessed and schools given advice.
- Helping schools to build capacity to cope with EAL students themselves (English as an Additional Language).
- Identify and fund hub schools where there is good practice. These hub schools act as mentors to other schools in helping to develop and roll-out effective policies.
- Identify training needs for all schools and run a training programme.

The number of EAL (English as an Additional Language) children in Wirral is shown below providing splits by district and between secondary, primary and special schools:

Table 1 : The number of EAL (English as an Additional language) children in Wirral (as at January 2012)

<i>EAL Numbers</i>		
<i>Wirral Jan 2012 census</i>		
Birkenhead	primary	360
	secondary	76
	special	
	total	456
Wallasey	primary	190
	secondary	105
	special	4
	total	299
West Wirral	primary	124
	secondary	127
	special	5
	total	256
South Wirral	primary	93
	secondary	145
	special	2
	total	240
all areas	total	1251

Source: MEAS Team, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

MEAS tries to promote cultural understanding across schools, with work taking place on multicultural activities in schools. The MEAS team currently includes two Bangladeshi members of staff. There are also Cantonese and Polish members of staff who are employed for one day per week. In addition, working in partnership with Wirral Multicultural Organisation (WMO), bilingual volunteers are recruited and trained to work with schools. There are currently approximately 20 volunteers working in schools. One volunteer at Rock Ferry Primary School has taught Mandarin to Year 1 and Year 2 children. There could be a potential for attracting new volunteers as a result of the arrival of newcomers arriving associated with the Trade Centre.

The MEAS team was formerly funded by Direct Government Grant to the Council. However, the grant is now allocated directly to schools who have, in the past, agreed to “keep it as a central pot” with which to fund the MEAS team. A review has recently taken place regarding the future requirements of schools. The primary schools have so far agreed to continue to fund a central MEAS team within the Council. The requirements of secondary schools are, at present, not clear. Final decisions will be made in January 2013.

In the future, the increasing presence of academies means that there is less certainty over the funding of Council services such as those provided by the MEAS team. It will be imperative that the MEAS team is able to demonstrate its worth to the schools across the Borough to guarantee continued support from as many schools as possible in order to maintain the funding.

Recommendation 16 – Awareness of the Council’s Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS)

The Director of Children and Young People’s Department is requested to ensure that all schools are made fully aware of the potential increase in the number of children from overseas arriving in Wirral and the potential impact on the Council’s Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS). The Schools Forum may be a helpful mechanism.

5.9 Council Officers’ / Members’ cultural awareness and training

Some aspects of Chinese culture became apparent during this Review. The Panel Members were informed by a witness of Chinese origin that:

“Chinese culture is very much status-orientated and hierarchical. Therefore, Chinese business people will feel that it is important to meet the most senior people. Chinese business people will appreciate friendly, hospitable guests. Business relationships are more likely to be successful if you are liked and respected. There is a process of relationship building and a need to get to know each other.”

Indeed, it was noted following the visit to Calday Grange Grammar School that, for the newly arrived Hanban teachers, an introduction to the school Headteacher is a sign of respect to the visitor and greatly appreciated. It is therefore, important that note is taken of this and many other cultural differences. As an example, cultural differences may give rise to differing views on timescales and ways of working. Council officers should do what they can to understand and respond positively to such challenges. It is important that potential inward investors are shown priority and, therefore, unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided wherever possible.

During this Review, it has been made clear that those UK citizens associated with the ITC project who have visited China have been made to feel extremely welcome. It is important that visiting delegations from China and other countries are made to feel equally welcome. This is of particular relevance to the Council when delegations are visiting municipal buildings, such as Wallasey Town Hall. Relatively small measures, such as a welcome in the language of the visitors can make a difference. There may also be an opportunity to involve schools in providing cultural displays during some of these visits.

Recommendation 17 – A warm welcome in Wirral

Delegations from overseas must be made to feel welcome in Wirral and especially at Council buildings including Wallasey Town Hall. An appropriate visible welcome should be provided including cultural displays which may present the opportunity for school involvement.

During this Scrutiny Review, the Panel Members had the opportunity to meet with Lindsey Ashworth and Kevin Adderley in an informal environment. During that meeting, the background to the ITC project and the vision for the future were explained. Panel Members found the meeting with Lindsey Ashworth both interesting and inspiring. It would be helpful if more members of the Council were able to have a similar opportunity.

Recommendation 18 – Members’ meetings with Lindsey Ashworth

Opportunities should be explored to give all Council members the opportunity to meet and discuss relevant issues with the Development Director of Peel Holding, Lindsey Ashworth.

In order to further raise the profile of the International Trade Centre among members and within the Council as a whole, it is suggested that an ITC Champion should be appointed. The success of the ITC project could lead to enormous benefits for the Borough. The appointment of an ITC Champion would give added impetus within the Council to help plan for the project and to ensure its eventual success.

Recommendation 19 – Appointment of an ITC Champion

Wirral Council should appoint an ITC Champion to help increase the profile of the International Trade Centre within the Council and to help plan for the Council’s involvement in the successful delivery of the project.

This Report was produced by the Trade Centre Scrutiny Panel (which reports to The Economy & Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee)

Appendix 1: Scope Document for the Trade Centre Scrutiny Review

Date: 12th June 2012

Review Title: Trade Centre Scrutiny Review

Scrutiny Panel Chair: Cllr Mark Johnston	Contact details:
Additional Panel members: Cllr Andrew Hodson Cllr Jean Stapleton	Contact details:
Scrutiny Officer: Alan Veitch	Contact details: 0151 691 8564
Departmental Link Officer: Kevin Adderley	Contact details: 0151 691 8187
Other Key Officer contacts:	
1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? 1.1 Market Wirral as a world class location for businesses and visitors. 1.2 Make Wirral Council one of the most business friendly and supportive Councils in the country. 1.3 Rebalance Wirral's economy and improve access to employment and skills opportunities and tackle barriers to work. 1.4 Develop wider public sector partnerships for the improvement of services to Wirral residents.	

2. What are the main issues?

The aim of the Scrutiny Review is to ensure that Wirral is as ready as possible to fully embrace the business opportunities that will be available as a result of the development of the International Trade Centre. Issues within the scope of the review relate to:

2.1 Wirral Businesses - What is the provision of local services available to Wirral firms as they prepare to trade with new companies and emerging markets?

- a. Import and export advice.
- b. VAT, excise duties and taxation issues.
- c. Contractual & legal advice.
- d. Shipping.
- e. Trading Standards / Safety Standards and Licensing issues.
- f. Language support.
- g. Business and cultural awareness.

2.2 Making Inward Investors welcome.

- a. Visa requirements
- b. Support services ready to meet cultural and language requirements, i.e. Hotels, car hire.
- c. Translation services.
- d. Legal support.
- e. Banking and money transfer services.
- f. Accommodation
- g. General advice – business, transport, schooling.

2.3 ITC business support needs

- a. What skills / support structures required by emerging market companies?
- b. What are the gaps?
- c. How can the Council and partners meet needs?

2.4 Marketing - How is the ITC to be marketed and what role can the Council play?

2.5 Development of cultural links.

- a. What resources exist because of Wirral's ethnic community and how can they be encouraged to engage?
- b. How can the Twin City relationships be promoted and celebrated?
- c. How can the wider Wirral community be encouraged to understand and embrace the emerging market cultures?

2.6 Language & Education

- a. Translation Services.
- b. English lessons.
- c. Cultural and language training for key service industries.
- d. School promotion of languages and cultures.

2.7 Council Officers / Members cultural awareness and training.

<p>3. The Committee’s overall aim/objective in doing this work is: Council agreed a motion on 16th April 2012 which included: “Council calls on the three Parties to agree membership for a 1:1:1 Member Working Party, reporting to the Economy and Regeneration OSC. This working Party will scope a project leading to recommendations to ensure this Council and its partners are Trade Centre ready and able to embrace all opportunities for development through its growing links with China and other countries and that potential barriers to businesses and investors are identified and recommendations made as to how these can be overcome”.</p>																			
<p>4. The possible outputs/outcomes are: 4.1 To help the communities of Wirral to engage effectively with the opportunities provided by the Trade Centre development</p>																			
<p>5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic? Further scrutiny will aim to establish how Wirral Council can play its part in ensuring that any remaining potential barriers to businesses, within the remit of the Council, are identified and corrected in advance of the Trade Centre being developed.</p>																			
<p>6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work? 6.1 Appropriate Cabinet members and Directors, Wirral Borough Council. 6.2 Partners of the Council who have an interest in the successful delivery of the Trade Centre.</p>																			
<p>7. Duration of enquiry? Council agreed a motion on 16th April 2012 which included: Council requests that the Working party completes this work in time to enable any recommendations to be implemented before the ITC is built and opens for business and so that recommendations have enough time to be considered for the setting of the 2013/14 budget, as appropriate”. Therefore, the Report is due before the end of 2012. (The Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to meet on 14th November 2012 and 16th January 2013).</p>																			
<p>8. What category does the review fall into?</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Policy Review</td> <td style="text-align: center;">x</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Policy Development</td> <td style="text-align: center;">x</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>External Partnership</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Performance Management</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holding Executive to Account</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Policy Review	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy Development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	External Partnership		<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Management		<input type="checkbox"/>	Holding Executive to Account		<input type="checkbox"/>			
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External Partnership		<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Management		<input type="checkbox"/>														
Holding Executive to Account		<input type="checkbox"/>																	
<p>9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness? The review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers. However, the panel are looking for advice from people with expertise on this topic.</p>																			

10. What information do we need?	
<p>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</p> <p>Recent Committee / Cabinet reports</p> <p>Relevant national documents</p> <p>Any relevant briefing papers</p> <p>Reports from other Councils regarding inward investment</p> <p>Examples of good practice from other Councils</p>	<p>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</p> <p>Interviews with key officers</p> <p>Interviews with representatives of the business community</p> <p>Interviews with representatives of the voluntary and community sector</p>
<p>10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc).</p> <p>Several meetings will be held including:</p> <p>Kevin Adderley, Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning, Wirral Borough Council</p> <p>Lindsey Ashworth, Development Director, Peel</p> <p>Representatives of the business community</p> <p>Invest Wirral, Wirral Borough Council</p> <p>Emma Degg, Head of Communications and Community Engagement, Wirral Borough Council – to discuss marketing issues</p> <p>David Armstrong, Acting Director of Children’s Services, Wirral Borough Council – to discuss language and cultural issues in schools</p> <p>Confucius Centre, Calday Grange Grammar School (and other schools)</p> <p>Wirral Multicultural Organisation</p> <p>Billy Hui, Wirral Chinese Association and other representatives of voluntary and community sector</p> <p>Plus others.....</p>	<p>10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p> <p>The issues identified in section 2 of this scope document.</p>

11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits/observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).

11.1 Meetings with officers, representatives of the business community and of the voluntary and community sector

11.2 Desk-top analysis

12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).

12.1 Discussions will be held with relevant voluntary and community organisations.