

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2013

SUBJECT:	<i>WIRRAL HERITAGE STRATEGY</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>CHRIS MCCARTHY</i>
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Members are asked to approve the updated Wirral Heritage Strategy and to note the progress which has been made in the implementation of the Action Plan.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 On 23rd November 2011, Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved:

(1) That the Wirral Heritage Strategy 2011 -2014 and Action Plan be approved.

(2) That the thanks of the committee be accorded to the officers and to the various organisations, associations and individuals who have been involved in the production of the Wirral Heritage Strategy.

(3) That a working group of officers be established to monitor the implementation of the Wirral Heritage Strategy.

(4) That a scrutiny working group be established to include the Chair and spokespersons of the Sustainable Communities O&S C and the Cabinet member for Culture, Tourism and Leisure, to discuss where the plan is going and to monitor any outcomes or issues within the plan as and when they arise, and to bring updated reports to scrutiny.

(5) That the post of Heritage Officer be made permanent.

3.0 PROGRESS

3.1 Since its adoption, the Wirral Heritage Strategy has been widely welcomed by local heritage groups and amenity societies and has been cited as an example of best practice by English Heritage.

3.2 In line with Members' recommendations a Heritage Strategy Working Group has been established to monitor progress and met on 13 November 2012. The officers represent all those service areas with direct or indirect responsibility for heritage issues: Heritage, Museums, Archives, Conservation, Parks and Countryside, Libraries, Asset Management, Regeneration and Destination Marketing. The Members comprise the Chair and spokespersons of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.3 The objectives of the Group are:

- (1) To monitor the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan to ensure that key tasks and milestones are achieved.
- (2) To further develop the Strategy by assessing new initiatives and proposals and updating the Strategy accordingly.
- (3) To work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to ensure that local people are included in both the development and delivery of the Strategy.
- (4) To promote Wirral's heritage in its widest sense and guide the Council, partners and the community towards common objectives.
- (5) To report regularly on progress and ensure that members and local people are kept informed about outcomes.

3.4 The Wirral Heritage Strategy is very wide-ranging; covering all aspects of the Borough's rich heritage, from built environment and outstanding natural landscapes, to how we look after and use our precious archives and museum collections. It places great emphasis on the importance of local people engaging with their heritage and demonstrates the central role the voluntary sector plays in promoting, caring for and interpreting heritage on Wirral. It seeks to raise the profile of Wirral's heritage and to highlight the important contribution heritage can make to regeneration and the local visitor economy.

3.4 One of the main successes of the Strategy has been to bring local people and groups together to debate heritage issues; and the views of local people were central to the development of the Strategy document. It also stresses the cost effectiveness of supporting local volunteers. Wirral's Heritage Open Days in September are now one of the largest in the country and a major highlight of the cultural calendar. This year 78 different events were organised by Wirral History and Heritage Association and partner organisations – all working in a voluntary capacity. The tremendous work achieved by civic, amenity and friends groups is probably the biggest single contributor to heritage activity throughout Wirral.

3.5 The recommendation that the post of Heritage Officer become permanent has strengthened support for community activity and helped to ensure that heritage initiatives have sustainability. The Heritage Officer now works with a wide range of partners from all sectors, to promote heritage-related projects and activities.

3.6 Not every action in the Strategy's Action Plan has been achieved; indeed given the current financial climate, some will not be achievable in the foreseeable future. However, in a climate of identifying different ways of delivering services and forging new and stronger partnerships, they should not be forgotten, but remain aspirations to be taken forward when practical.

3.7 Whilst the Action Plan has been revised to show progress so far, the body of the Heritage Strategy has only been updated to reflect a changing strategic context at local, regional and national levels and to include heritage issues and concerns which have grown in significance in the last 12 months.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 Like any Strategy, implementation will be determined by funding availability and people resources. However, the strategic principles remain constant.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 A priority in developing this Strategy was to engage local people throughout the process. A Community Engagement Plan has now been prepared to engage a wider and more diverse audience in heritage activity, particularly targeting groups and communities who for social, cultural or physical reasons, are currently excluded. The Heritage Officer regularly reports on progress to local organisations and information is also disseminated through the Wirral History and Heritage network. A workshop on local heritage issues, giving local people an opportunity to contribute to further strategy development is planned for 2013.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 One of the Strategy objectives is to promote community participation and voluntary, community and faith organisations all have a key role to play in its development and implementation. The Community Engagement Plan will provide a clear strategy for more effective and pro-active engagement with diverse and minority communities.

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

8.1 Many of the key actions in the Strategy are dependant upon funding being drawn from a wide range of sources and attracting external funding will be key to their success.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

(c) The Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken in line with the development of the Community engagement Plan.

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None arising from this report.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Heritage Strategy supports national and local policy for the protection of the historic built environment and emphasises the importance of working with local communities to safeguard the character of local heritage assets and areas.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 That the committee approve the updated Heritage Strategy and note the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Action Plan.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 To agree the continued implementation of the Heritage Strategy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Updated Heritage Strategy and action plan.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee	23 November 2011