

## **IMPROVEMENT BOARD – KEY MESSAGES** **WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY**

### Improvement Plan progress

Cllr. Ann McLachlan updated the Board on the progress made against the Improvement Plan, emphasising that the key target of ensuring future budget stability for the Council had been the priority since the last meeting. Work is underway regarding the review of the Council's Constitution and new models of working relating to Scrutiny and Neighbourhood Working are being developed. She made clear the importance of ensuring all Elected Members are engaged moving forward with particular reference to the Democracy Working Party.

Cllr. Tom Harney, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stressed the importance of ensuring future plans are based on an honest appraisal of the Council and where mistakes had been made before, particularly relating to the treatment of staff. Chief Executive, Graham Burgess reported that a full staff survey would be undertaken in the autumn to ensure that any ongoing issues are identified and addressed in the Organisational Development Plan that is currently being developed.

It was agreed that regular meetings of the Council's Leaders Board are crucial and that at their next meeting this matter would be discussed with a report brought back to a future meeting of the Improvement Board.

### Chief Executive Update

Graham Burgess presented his report stressing the support provided by Members that has facilitated good progress since the last meeting.

The Board were updated regarding the budget consultation process and other matters including negotiations towards a new severance scheme. Both reports will be shared with Improvement Board for their consideration. He also reported on the appointment of new Strategic Directors, Claire Fish and Joe Blott. The Board welcomed the appointments and the associated management restructure which will deliver savings and ensure more effective delivery of improvements.

### Council Budget position

The substantive item considered was a report regarding the Council's budget position.

Graham Burgess presented the report, which can be found on the Council website at @@@@. SIGOMA (Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities outside London) have indicated that Wirral has received the largest cut in funding from Central Government, 2.62% - representing a reduction of £151 per resident.

The Chief Executive also outlined the Council's substantial in year budget issues including bad debt and under funded budgets. He outlined the steps currently being taken to address these which include ongoing discussions with the Department of Communities and Local

Government. The Board welcomed the appointment of Eugene Sullivan, previously Chief Executive of the Audit Commission, who will provide additional external scrutiny moving forward.

The Board made clear their view that Wirral Council faces budget pressures that are, in their view, unprecedented. Detailed debate took place and it was agreed a single item meeting take place to consider the budget issues further prior to the setting of the Council's budget on 5<sup>th</sup> March.

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