

COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Council's Corporate Plan is clear in that the Council budget – in terms of investment decisions and budget savings – should be set according to three key priorities;

- Tackle health inequalities, poverty and disadvantage - narrow the gap between our richest and poorest communities
- Protect the vulnerable, making sure people are safe and feel safe – and can remain independent as long as possible
- Driving economic growth – investing in Wirral's future

The Council is also committed to ensure that savings are identified and delivered based on the following principles where possible:

- Spend less on the cost of running the Council
- Broadest shoulders to bear the greatest burden
- Mitigate the impact of savings on frontline services

This document is designed to provide Members and stakeholders with concise, relevant information related to the challenges and opportunities influencing the future delivery of community and neighbourhood services.

1.1 Overall Context

Wirral's local environment and the economy are arguably the two biggest factors in driving the quality of life, health and levels of achievement for our residents.

Every year, the Council invests huge resources in both maintaining and improving the local environment, and in stimulating the local economy – through helping our local businesses to succeed and expand, and encouraging businesses to start up or relocate in Wirral.

We have had, and are working towards, huge successes. Projects such as the New Brighton development, the revitalisation of Birkenhead Park, the International Trade Centre, and International Golf Resort and, particularly, Wirral Waters are significant on a national and global scale.

We are determined that Wirral be a place where businesses flourish and people have access to good jobs, and quality, affordable homes in a pleasant, safe and clean environment.

The current funding reductions are the biggest challenge Councils, particularly northern Councils, have ever faced. Put simply, the demand for our services will soon outstrip the funding we have to

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provide them. Overcoming this challenge is difficult, and means we have to think radically and find new ways of working with our communities, with our businesses, and with our residents.

We need to focus our resources into areas that will have the most impact; we have to make difficult decisions as we simply do not have the resources to continue spending the same amounts to reach our goals.

We should not, and will not, be discouraged by this. The opportunities we have within our grasp are huge. Our regeneration projects are underway and will transform our economy, and our physical landscape and location are the envy of the country – proven by the numbers of visitors to Wirral rising at a faster rate than anywhere in the North West.

1.2 Purpose of Session

The purpose of this session is to enable Members to debate the future direction of service provision as described within this document, particularly in relation to the principles which are provided. Members are also provided with a summary of the emerging options within this theme for consideration.

Further work will be completed on developing these options, alongside more, before they are published by the Chief Executive for public, staff and stakeholder consultation in September 2014.

2.0 FUTURE DIRECTION

The services within the Community and Neighbourhood theme have been grouped as such due to their shared or similar outcomes for residents. Given a number of the services involved are also delivered from physical locations throughout the borough to look for synergies and where constituency committees can be more involved in influencing and designing service provision in their local areas.

2.1 Principles for Change

The challenge now is to take our current service model, in the context of our current and future demographic challenges and our vastly reduced financial resources, and redesign it completely – ensuring we deliver the outcomes residents need effectively and within budget in accordance with the Corporate Plan. To help inform that transformation, a series of principles have been developed which will be used to guide service re-design and potential budget options.

- Increasing Income; making sure that full cost recovery is achieved where practical and review all service level agreements with partners to ensure charging is appropriate.

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- Being More Efficient; making our workforce more flexible and able to work across current department and service boundaries, and investing in technology to reduce the dependence on expensive access channels for services.
- Targeting Resources; reviewing the levels of services provided against the legal requirements, and increasing the devolved resources allocated to constituency committees to direct services in their local area.
- New Models of Delivery; involving people who use services in their redesign, their commissioning, their procurement and evaluation.

3.0 EMERGING OPTIONS

Initial, emerging budget options have been identified which will continue to be worked on, to develop full business plans and impact assessments before they are published for full consultation by the Chief Executive in September.

- Ensure resources are allocated appropriately, through a full review of all service provision against their statutory requirement, as well as reviewing all fees and charges to ensure full cost recovery is delivered.
- Invest in the right technology, to ensure accessing Council services is efficient and effective through online channels – thereby reducing the dependency on expensive face to face channels.
- Drive a culture change in our workforce, ensuring that where appropriate a commercial culture exists to identify and maximise income opportunities.
- Streamline administrative processes, removing all wasted effort and duplication from services
- Create more generic functions where outcomes, process and skill sets are similar to drive efficiencies and provide a more joined up service to residents.
- Maximise the devolvement of budgets to constituency committees to create efficiencies

4.0 SERVICES IN SCOPE

The services below are considered within this theme, which primarily fall between four 'blocks';

Looking after the Environment:

Services which have a direct impact on the Borough's environment, and whose primary function is to work with either partners or commissioned providers to ensure work is delivered across a range of areas through similar processes.

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- Highways Management
- Traffic and Transport
- Waste and Environment

Regulation and Enforcement:

Services in which the primary function is either regulatory or related to enforcement; although the services within this theme are substantially different the skill set, general approach and resource requirement is generally similar across the following functions.

- Building Control
- Development Management
- Environmental Health
- Housing Standards & Renewal
- Trading Standards
- Licensing

Neighbourhood Services:

Services which are based upon a physical location, and therefore have the potential to be delivered based on a geographical or neighbourhood model.

- Day Services
- Libraries
- Lifelong and Family Learning
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Sports and Recreation
- Sports Development Unit
- Youth and Play

Cultural Services:

Services that have been grouped together due to the similar functions of being cultural, leisure based visitor attractions within the borough.

- Floral Pavilion
- Museums

Driving Economic Growth:

Services that are designed to stimulate the local economy, either through working with businesses already here, driving up skills or encouraging inward investment.

- Regeneration and Economic Development
- Invest Wirral
- Destination Marketing
- Forward Planning

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- Housing Strategy

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