

**BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE
HANDBOOK 2014/15**

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

What is this handbook for?

This Handbook provides practical guidance to everyone involved with Birkenhead Constituency Committee; including residents, ward councillors, service delivery partners and Council officers.

Birkenhead Constituency Committee was formed in July 2013. This Handbook sets out procedures and processes to deliver the function of the Constituency Committee. The guidance in this Handbook should be read alongside the Council's constitution (accessed by link below)

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD867&ID=867&RPID=1000884748&sch=doc&cat=12881&path=12881>

While the Handbook supports the rules and procedures set out in the Council's Constitution (available on the Council's website www.wirral.gov.uk), the Council's Constitution will always take precedence over the Handbook. This Handbook will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Wirral's Vision

Wirral Council's Vision is:

"Wirral will be a place where the vulnerable are safe and protected, where employers want to invest and local businesses thrive, and where good health and an excellent quality of life is within the reach of everyone who lives here".

The vision and aspiration for Neighbourhood working in Wirral is:

"Strong neighbourhood working can provide the basis for the Council, public services and the wider community to work together to resolve residents issues, work in partnership and involving residents and groups to have a greater say on how their local services are delivered."

The Constituency Committees will help improve the link between the strategic priorities and local priorities. It is the Constituency Committee that will deliver an area vision, which local elected members, local residents, service delivery partners, Council officers and voluntary, community and faith groups will implement.

Aspirations for Birkenhead

Birkenhead Constituency includes the wards of Birkenhead and Tranmere, Bidston and St James, Claughton, Oxtan, Prenton and Rock Ferry

Aspirations of the Committee have been agreed by Ward Councillors through consultation with residents in public places and feedback from those who have attended Committee meetings. The Aspirations for 2014/15 are:

- Maintain regular contact with constituents
- Reduce inequalities currently evident for Birkenhead Constituents
- Utilise Assets within Birkenhead in terms of people and places
- Increase use of Outdoor Spaces and Improve Environment
- Maximise Economic Growth

- Create a strong sense of identity
- Improve Perception of Birkenhead
- Enhance Community Engagement and Cohesion
- Reduction in Social Isolation

The Constituency Committee is developing a Constituency Plan to identify priorities for the area. Currently resources have been allocated to 4 priorities:

1. Improving data and intelligence regarding current spend and outcomes.
2. Improving the Environment
3. Improving Communication
4. Improving Services for Young People

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SECTION 2: ROLE OF THE CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE

For 2014/15 Birkenhead Constituency Committee is chaired by the local MP and consists of 18 elected members (three ward councillors for each of its six wards). One of the Ward Councillors will act as Vice Chair.

The role of Birkenhead Constituency Committee includes the following:

- Agree desired outcomes, develop and monitor a Constituency Plan for Birkenhead;
- Commission activities relevant to the Constituency Plan within the allocated budget within any given year;
- Review, problem solve and recommend/influence the most effective operation of responsive front line services;
- Resolve community issues which impact on residents;
- Maximise the engagement of local residents and other stakeholders

Conduct of meetings

There will be 4 meetings per annum. The Committee meeting dates for 2014/15 and further details are in Appendix 1.

The Constituency Committee agenda is published no less than 5 working days before the date of the meeting. These are published online at www.wirral.gov.uk.

Each committee has an assigned Constituency Manager and Strategic Director, both of these officers will attend the meetings. Attendance of others such as Council Officers, Councillors from other Constituencies, partner organisation will be asked when required in relation to the agenda.

Members of the Committee will be required to make a declaration of any interest that is known to them at the start of every meeting, indicating whether it is a personal, or a prejudicial interest and how the interest arises. It may also be necessary for members to make an interest known if an interest arises during the course of the meeting, and where necessary leave the room whilst decisions are made.

Appendix 2 details a role description for

- Chair and Vice Chair
- Ward Councillors
- Birkenhead Constituency Manager
- Birkenhead Engagement Officer
- Strategic Director
- Committee Services Officer
- Legal Services Officer
- Council Officers and Service Delivery Partners

Appendix 3 details full list of members and support officers contact details for the Committee

Task & Finish Groups

A Task & Finish Group can be set up by the Committee to undertake a specific piece of work or analysis. The membership of The Task and Finish Groups will be formed from self nominations from the constituency committee. The Constituency Manager will undertake an advisory role with these groups and additional advisors may be appointed by the Group (including from partner agencies). Progress will be reported to the Constituency Committee.

Public Service Board

Wirral Public Service Board (PSB) is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive. The Board exists for partners to proactively work together to identify and deliver efficiencies and opportunities for joint working. Through an agreed work programme, the Board (amongst other things) develops collective responses to national and local policy drivers impacting on all partners and strategically manages Wirral's approach to neighbourhood working.

Birkenhead Constituency Committee will be supported by a Birkenhead Public Service Board consisting of a range of services, agencies and partners to co-ordinate the strategic delivery of the Constituency Plan. Progress of the Public Service Board in relation to specific actions and developments will be reported to the Constituency Committee.

Social Sector

The Constituency Committee is supported by the Social Sector who will work together as a range of service providers and agencies to inform and support the strategic delivery of the Constituency Plan and report progress/findings to the Constituency Committee.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Community Engagement

Birkenhead Constituency Committee will support opportunities for the community to have their say. This will form part of standard practice and cover aspects from the delivery of services to policy and decision making. The Constituency Committee recognises that the most effective form of engagement is 'involvement'.

In 2014/15 it is important for the Committee to gather information on what the community has and wants in terms of assets and needs. Birkenhead Constituency Committee will use **Community Research** on specific pieces of work or analysis in relation to the priorities in the Constituency Plan

Overview:

Community Researchers are residents who are members of a community who are given training to conduct research in their own community.

Community Researchers can be used when researching a particular topic, sensitive issues specific to a certain social group and is a way of engaging with traditional hard to reach groups.

There are a number of benefits to engaging through Community Researchers:

- Working with a community also enables the research to be a two way process in which information can be given to the communities who participate.
- In-depth community engagement can provide important insights into attitudes, beliefs and behaviour in particular communities which quantitative data cannot explain.
- Working with Community Researchers develops relationships with hard to reach groups.
- A template is provided for the Community Researchers to write up their findings in the same format. This ensures that the data can be analysed and used effectively.

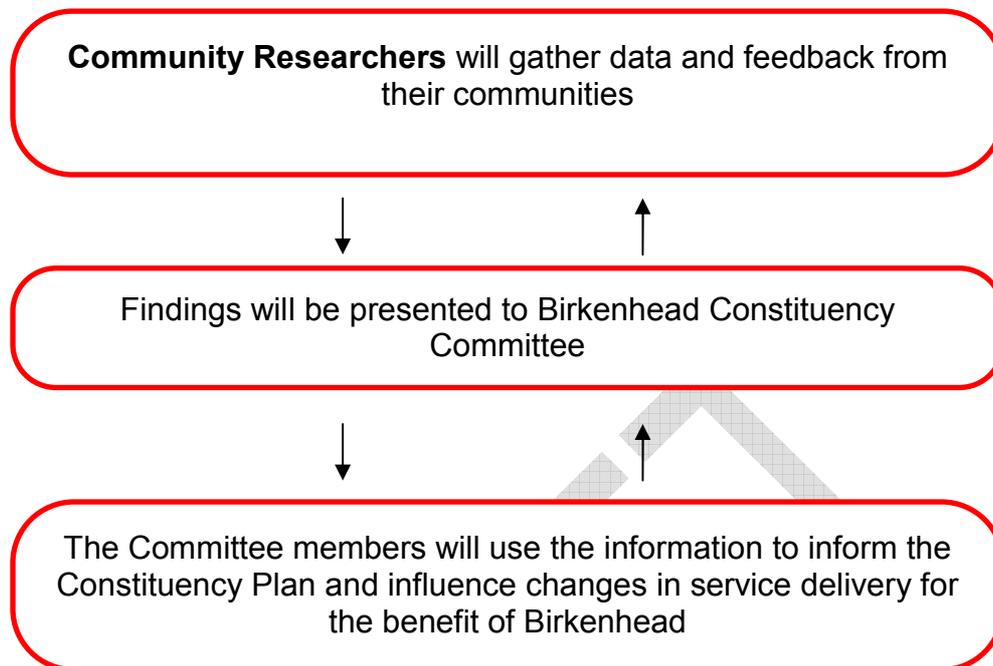
How it would work:

The aim for Birkenhead Constituency Committee to develop a team of Community Researchers would allow research to be gathered from groups and residents, some that may not have been engaged with before.

After initially recruiting residents who want to volunteer as Community Researchers and giving them the required training the scheme would work by Community Researchers gathering data and feedback from their communities to present the findings to Birkenhead Constituency Committee.

The Committee members will work with the researchers and use their strategic drive through the new neighbourhood approach to bring about the

change that Communities and Councillors want for the benefit of Birkenhead. It will assist to build community capacity, improve the local knowledge-base and facilitate the achievement of good practice and improved service delivery.



The committee will direct the engagement in terms of what are the topics of research in relation to the priorities identified in the Constituency Plan.

The information gathered will inform the committee to develop priorities and localise service delivery for Birkenhead.

Public Question Time

Each Constituency Committee meeting will include a Public Question Time. Whilst a small proportion of time will be allowed for 'on the night' questions, in order to enable a comprehensive response at the meeting and to allow members of the public to participate who are unable to attend the meeting, questions will be required to be submitted in writing in advance of the meeting.

This will be facilitated using online and downloadable forms on the Council's web site, with hard copies available in public buildings based in the Constituency or can be posted on request. Residents requiring additional support or alternative formats of the forms in terms of with literacy or languages can have submissions made on their behalf or be supported to complete forms by Council One Stop Shops. Questions will be required to be submitted by no later than 4.00pm the afternoon before the Committee meeting. The Chair of the meeting will determine which questions will be dealt with at the Committee and the order in which they will be taken.

No less than 20 minutes will be set aside for the Public Question Time. Questions that are not able to be covered will be responded to in writing within 14 working days by the Constituency Manager. If questions are asked from a member of the public in attendance will be allowed 'on the night' it will be the Chairs decision based on the agenda and timings if they are dealt with there or responded to in writing after the meeting, this will be done within 14 working days by the Constituency Manager

Process for Submitting a Question

Questions must be in writing and relate to a single issue. This can be done by:

- Completing the form online
<https://wirral.firmstep.com/default.aspx/RenderForm/?F.Name=eHrcFJB1cP1&HideToolbar=1>
- Downloading the Question Form from this webpage and sending your completed form to:
Dawn Tolcher, Birkenhead Constituency Manager, Wallasey Town Hall, Brighton Street
- Requesting hard copy or electronic copy of the form by contacting Dawn Tolcher on 0151 691 8295 or dawntolcher@wirral.gov.uk

The form should be completed and submitted to the Constituency Manager no later than 4.00pm on the day of the meeting. **Please be aware that the earlier you submit your question in advance of a Constituency Committee meeting, the more likely you are to receive an answer at the meeting itself.**

The aim will be to answer your question at the meeting, if not you will receive a written response within 14 working days.

Process at the Meeting

- The Chair of the Constituency Committee will decide which matters are dealt with and the order in which they are taken.
- Questions which are defamatory, unsuitable, frivolous or derogatory will not be accepted. Questions should not refer to individual officers or Members of the Council by name.
- At the meeting, one supplementary question maybe asked to the originals query.
- A maximum period of 5 minutes is allowed for a statement or speech by the person who wishes to make representations or present a petition to the Area Committee. After the statement, the speaker may be asked questions. This is up to the Chair of the meeting and this period will not exceed 5 minutes. To ensure best use is made of the Public Forum, it is not intended that representations should prompt lengthy debate.
- You can normally only ask one question, make one representation or submit one petition to each meeting of the Area Committee. However, at the discretion of the Chair an additional question or representation may be allowed if time permits. You cannot ask the same question, make the same representation, or submit the same petition again within a 3 month period.

Public Consultation Event

This will be a 'marketplace' type engagement events for the public. It will aim to offer residents the opportunity to receive updates and ask questions in relation to public sector services. The Constituency Manager and Engagement Officer will coordinate the events and Public Sector Partners will attend, Ward Councillors will attend when required to share and update.

Specific consultation events will take place with partners to deliver a targeted piece of consultation. These will be in public places aiming to meet as many residents as possible.

Community Engagement Framework

Wider methods of public engagement are set out in Birkenhead Constituency's Community Engagement Framework (Appendix 4).

SECTION 4: BUDGETS AND SPEND

For 2014/15 the Committee has been given an allocation of £50,000 to commission services in relation to the priorities identified in the Constituency Plan.

Local Authority Processes must be adhered to ensuring spend is accountable with a transparent and fair process.

The Committee will discuss proposals within the public meetings for spend of the budget allocation. Where appropriate the committee can assign responsibility to progress actions to the Priorities Task and Finish group when agreed to do so. This group consists of the Chair of Birkenhead Constituency Committee and four Ward Councillors.

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Appendix 1
Birkenhead Constituency Committee Meetings 2014/15

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
24 th July 2014	6.00-8.00pm	Birkenhead Town Hall
30 th October 2014	6.00-8.00pm	Birkenhead Town Hall
29 th January 2015	6.00-8.00pm	Birkenhead Town Hall
9th April 2015	6.00-8.00pm	Birkenhead Town Hall

Access

If representatives or members of the public have any particular requirements or access needs to enable them to participate in the meeting, including requirement for information in formats such as large print or on tape, please contact the Committee Services Officer beforehand so arrangements can be made in good time.

Appendix 2

Chair and Vice-Chair

Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected by vote by elected members.

Role responsibilities:

- Ensure that the Constituency Committee operates in accordance with the Council's Constitution;
- Provide leadership for the Committee through the chairing of each Committee meeting (Vice-Chair in the Chair's absence), in accordance with the contents of this Handbook;
- Ensure the production and effective implementation of the annual Constituency Plan;
- Plan the agenda for each Constituency Committee meeting with the Constituency Manager;
- Ensure that decisions taken at Constituency Committee meetings are implemented;
- Ensure adequate representation on Task & Finish Groups and that each group achieve its aims;
- Ensure that there are adequate opportunities for community engagement, particularly under-represented groups;
- Ensure that public meetings are delivered to the highest standard, demonstrating transparency in decision-making and cultivating the trust of the general public in local politics;
- Act as a spokesperson for Birkenhead Constituency Committee where appropriate, including in relevant press releases and statements;
- Attend and be a member of other Committees or working groups when appropriate in the role as Chair;
- Foster and maintain a disciplined approach by the members involved, having a regard to high standards of behaviour and ethics.
- Champion the work of the Constituency Committee.

Elected Members

Members of the Council representing those wards included within Birkenhead Constituency Committee boundary will endeavour to attend each Constituency Committee meeting.

Role responsibilities:

- Act as honest brokers or intermediaries between citizen, community, the Council and external partners;

- Take action to improve the quality of life of people in their communities;
- Act as champions and representatives of each and every resident;
- Investigate and resolve residents' problems effectively or explain to them why they cannot be solved;
- Be well informed, know their area and be clear about local priorities.

Elected members in a corporate role will:

- Be effective ambassadors for the Council in their communities;
- Reflect the community's feedback and views in the Council's decision making processes to make policies and services more responsive;
- Make objective and informed decisions that balance local needs and priorities with those of the wider borough;
- Represent the Council's interests in local partnership working;
- Act in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Constituency Manager

The Constituency Manager is responsible for the co-ordination of Birkenhead Constituency Service Hub and engagement activities, building neighbourhood profiles and ensuring residents' issues are resolved.

Role responsibilities:

- Co-ordinate the Constituency Committee meetings.
- Lead the development and implementation of the annual Constituency Plan and report on progress to the Constituency Committee, and including budgeting information;
- Lead consultations/service reviews/community needs assessments across the constituency involving residents, partners, customers, etc. to inform the Constituency Committee;
- Working with the Public Health Intelligence Team, ensure that an up-to-date and comprehensive Constituency Profile is available to the Committee to enable decision-making to be evidence-based around priorities;
- Identify and bid for constituency funding opportunities at national, regional and local levels;
- Identify and manage a process for identifying and managing neighbourhood profiling/community assets information;
- Manage any issues that may arise from resolving neighbourhood residents' issues (e.g. brokering, mediation, facilitation, etc);
- Devise and implement Birkenhead Constituency's Community Engagement Framework;

- Design, manage and implement a diverse range of communications platforms across the Constituency, promoting its work and achievements;

Engagement Officer

The Engagement Officer is responsible for the liaison and engagement with local groups and partnerships in the implementation of the Constituency Plan.

- Support the administration of the Constituency Committee, including booking venues and completing health and safety checks on venues prior to use;
- Be a proactive link to elected members, community groups, representatives and organisations;
- Deliver Birkenhead Constituency's Community Engagement Framework;
- Ascertain neighbourhood resource requirements (funding, community spaces, service needs, volunteering, etc.);
- Gather neighbourhood information and knowledge in order to build the Constituency Profile, including managing a process for identifying and recording up-to-date neighbourhood profiling/community assets information;
- Support the implementation of the Constituency Plan;
- Undertake consultation and engagement activities;
- Support neighbourhood volunteers;
- Resolve neighbourhood issues;

Council officers and service delivery partners

Birkenhead Constituency Committee may ask representatives of external service delivery organisations to attend their committee meetings, recognising the important contribution which they make to shaping and delivering local area priorities.

Representatives of area partners will be of senior management level or equivalent and therefore be able to speak for their organisation and be prepared to commit resources on behalf of their organisations.

Role responsibilities:

- Provide representation at the appropriate level of authority and experience;
- Attend the Committee when requested to do so, where practicable;
- Have high level knowledge of the service area and its strategic operating context;
- Commit to improving the quality of life and satisfaction of residents in the area;

- Take an active role in owning and solving problems identified by the Constituency Committee;
- Commit to promoting the interests of the area in decision making processes within their own organisation;
- Commit to engaging, involving and feedback with local residents in the design, delivery and improvement of services;
- Identify and assist the Constituency Committees, where relevant, in generating and match funding projects of strategic significance;
- Commit to construct, challenge and proactively improve services;
- Work with key contacts and stakeholders to create and build appropriate networks and partnerships to promote the Constituency Committee, priorities and performance measures;
- Monitor the quantity and quality of performance management, reviews and projects.
- Establish methods for promoting and sharing intelligence, information and good practice.
- Objectivity in accessing issues and opportunities and how to approach these in the best interests of the area;
- Acceptance of the Constituency Committee procedures and process

Committee Services Officer

Role responsibilities:

- Efficiently and effectively run the administration of the Constituency committee;
- Manage publication of the agenda for the Constituency Committee;
- Advise the Committee members on constitutional matters and provide advice and guidance on constitutional compliance;
- Invite all elected Members/Representatives and guests to pre meetings, Constituency Committees and extra ordinary meetings;
- Take accurate minutes of the meeting;
- Place all actions on the electronic action tracker for officers to report on progress;
- Chase actions agreed upon by the Committee and when necessary ensure that relevant service delivery partners/officers feed back into the Constituency Committee;
- Upload all minutes of meetings onto the Council's website;
- Manage the public question time;
- Provide advice and guidance on constitutional compliance;
- Issue materials provided by the Constituency Manager to representatives on the Committee.

Legal Services Officer

Role responsibilities:

- Advise the Committee members on legal matters.

Strategic Director

Birkenhead Constituency Committee is aligned to a Strategic Director (Families and Wellbeing). The Strategic Director will reinforce the strategic importance of the area dimension to the Council's policy and planning framework, and in particular will reinforce the importance the Council places on enhancing community governance, aligning resources and activity and improving public service delivery at a local level. The Strategic Director will also ensure an improved localities dimension to the Council's strategic planning. The role is to help clear 'blockages' and ensure issues of the Constituency Committee are taken to the highest levels.

Role responsibilities:

- Provide high level representation from the Council's officer core to support the process and outcomes of the Committee's actions;
- Provide clarity and direction for the staff supporting the Constituency Committee and implementing the Constituency Plan once agreed;
- Ensure that strong links are made between the Constituency Committee and the overarching commitments of Wirral Council's Corporate Plan and framework providing for partnership activity, including Wirral Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and Public Service Board (PSB).

Appendix 3 CONTACT DETAILS for COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Constituency Committee Chair	
Chair	Contact Details
Frank Field MP	fieldf@parliament.uk
Ward Councillors	
Councillor	Contact Details
Jim Crabtree Bidston and St James	Phone: 0151 652 4738 Mob: 07402 958650 email: jimcrabtree@wirral.gov.uk
Ann McLachlan Bidston and St James	Phone: 0151 522 0299 email: annmclachlan@wirral.gov.uk
Harry Smith Bidston and St James	Phone: 0151 608 5886 Fax: 0151 609 1730 email: harrysmith@wirral.gov.uk
Phil Davies Birkenhead and Tranmere	Phone: 0151 625 3320 Mobile: 07720 073154 Email: phildavies@wirral.gov.uk
Brian Kenny Birkenhead and Tranmere	Phone: 0151 638 5488 Mobile: 07850 091 517 email: briankenny@wirral.gov.uk
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George Davies Claughton	Phone: 0151 653 4265 Fax: 0151 653 3478 Mobile: 07713 644330 email: georgedavies@wirral.gov.uk
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	Email: stuartkelly@wirral.gov.uk
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Tony Norbury Prenton	Phone: 0151 643 8796 Mobile: 07952 297652 Email: tonynorbury@wirral.gov.uk
Denise Realey Prenton	Phone: 0151 652 3059 email: deniserealey@wirral.gov.uk
Bill Davies Rock Ferry	Phone: 0151 652 1199 Mobile: 07867 772437 Email: billdavies@wirral.gov.uk
Moira McLaughlin Rock Ferry	Phone: 0151 644 8234 Fax: 0151 652 3248 Mobile: 07880 348024 email: moiramclaughlin@wirral.gov.uk
Chris Meaden Rock Ferry	Phone: 0151 645 1729 Fax: 0151 643 1655 Mobile: 07738 824130 email: chrismeaden@wirral.gov.uk
Council Officers	
Joe Blott Strategic Director	Phone: 0151 691 8001 Email: joemblott@wirral.gov.uk
Dawn Tolcher Constituency Committee Manager	Phone: 0151 691 8295 Email: dawntolcher@wirral.gov.uk
Andy Brannan Neighbourhood Engagement Officer	Phone: 0151 691 8391 Email: andrewbrannan@wirral.gov.uk
Lyndzay Roberts Committee Services	Phone: 0151 691 8262 Email: lyndzayroberts@wirral.gov.uk

BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2014/15

Who	Goal	Method
Residents	To ensure strong neighbourhood working provides the basis for the Council, public services and the wider community working in partnership to resolve residents issues by involving residents to have a greater say on how their local services are delivered	By distributing council information to the residents who are registered on the council's email distribution list.
		Develop a project which invites and supports residents to become Community Researchers in their area. Community Researchers will play a vital role in ensuring residents views are consideration when decisions on service delivery are made.
		Working closely with the Community Connectors based within social sector groups to share important information to the wider community. Community Connectors play a vital role within the community and will ensure information is distributed to residents who may not engage with traditional services such as the council.
		Develop a targeted approach to communicating with residents and recognising that it is important to engage with people from different demographic groups in different ways.
Social Sector Groups	To improve communication between the council and social sector groups to share priorities and increase partnership working to maximise resources.	Continually add groups to the Birkenhead directory were possible and expand knowledge of Social Sector groups active in the Birkenhead area to ensure all relevant groups/organisations are included when carrying out engagement on a particular project or issue.

		Develop a Birkenhead Constituency Committee Social Sector email distribution list to send relevant news and information
		By encouraging Social Sector Groups to work closer together. Developing Social Sector Forums across a number of themes will help share information between groups and organisations.
		Continually promoting funding opportunities available to the Social Sector.
Business Sector	To ensure traders groups and the business sector are supported to play an active role in feeding concerns and suggestions for the improvement of services.	Supporting traders groups and businesses to come together to help discuss and highlight issues affecting the area.
		Engage with the Wirral Chamber of Commerce to identify opportunities for partnership working between the Business Sector, Social Sector and the council and its partners.
Professionals	Encouraging partnership working to identify potential duplication in services by sharing information, ideas and develop exciting projects between various organisations.	Through attending relevant partnership meetings to highlight services and projects were partnership working between Social Sector Groups, the council and its partners would be beneficial to all involved and lead to better service delivery.
		By devising a method for information exchange between professional from the council and its partners to ensure greater partnership working and reduction in duplication.

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