

**WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**CONSULTATION PLAN**

**PROPOSAL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF  
SELECTIVE LICENSING IN DESIGNATED  
WIRRAL AREAS**

## **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1** This report sets out Wirral Council's Consultation Plan in relation to the potential implementation of a pilot selective licensing scheme across selected Wirral communities.
- 1.2** The consultation programme will be meaningful and comprehensive, providing interested parties with detailed, accessible information on the proposal and providing a choice of methods for providing their views.
- 1.3** Concerns raised by all stakeholders through this consultation process will be accurately reported to Members in order that due regard can be given and informed decisions can be taken.

## **2.0 CONSULTATION**

- 2.1** Wirral is committed to asking everyone with an interest in the services that the Council provides, including residents, community groups, partners and staff, to consider proposals and share views so that they can be taken into account by Councillors when they make decisions on the future service delivery.
- 2.2** With particular reference to Selective Licensing, Part 3, Section 80 (9) of the Housing Act 2004 states that before considering making a designation for Selective Licensing the local housing authority must:
  - a) Take reasonable steps to consult persons who are likely to be affected by the designation; and
  - b) Consider any representations made in accordance with the consultation and not withdrawn.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has a procedural document on the subject of selective licensing: *Approval steps for additional and selective licensing designations in England*.

Within this document it is clear that local authority are required to conduct a full consultation in considering designation of selective licensing. Consultation should include local resident, including tenants, landlords and where appropriate their managing agents and other members of the community who live or operate businesses or provide services within the proposed designation. It should also include local residents and those who operate businesses or provide services in the surrounding area outside the proposed designation that will be affected.

The consultation period required by DCLG is ten weeks. This is the period adopted for the consultation on the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme and will commence in December 2014.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

- 3.1** Consultation should be appropriate to the scale, scope and nature of the project being completed. Effective consultation that is meaningful and genuine depends on all stakeholders being sufficiently well-informed about the project, having clear, concise information, the opportunity to convey their perspectives and their concerns, and developing confidence that their perspectives are being reflected in the design.
- 3.2** It is common for consultation processes to result in changes to the project and to its design. In order to make the maximum contribution to risk management in return for the smallest cost, consultation therefore needs to commence early and continue throughout the project life-cycle.
- 3.3** This is at the heart of Wirral's consultation plan which has been set out for the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme and we will achieve this via:-
- publishing a detailed business case outlining the reasons for the proposal, the method used to identify the proposed licensing areas, the components of the fee structure and any potential impacts both positive and negative.
  - priming of discussions by providing some initial information about the project;
  - making sure there is ongoing dialogue with consultees throughout the consultation process;
  - participation of those tenants and residents affected or likely to be effected by the proposed implementation in the designated areas;
  - facilitated interactions among participants;
  - making sure that there is sufficient diversity among those groups or individuals being consulted, to ensure that all relevant perspectives are represented, and all relevant information is gathered;
  - making sure that each group has the opportunity to provide information;
  - making sure that the method of consultation suits the consultation group, for example using workshops or focus groups as an alternative to, or even as well as, formal written consultation;
  - making sure that the information provided and the perspectives, concerns and issues raised during the consultation process are analysed and duly considered in the final design and implementation of any scheme taken forward.

### **3.4 Consultation will be taking place using the following methods:**

- Wirral Council website: [www.wirral.gov.uk/selective](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/selective) licensing and other social media.
- Direct mail-out to landlords and managing/letting agents.
- Engagement sessions with managing/letting agents.
- Mail drop to all residents and businesses or services within the selected areas and in the surrounding areas outside of the proposed designation who may be affected or who are likely to consider that they live in the same locality as the proposed scheme.
- Direct mail and email to local communities (this includes a number of harder to reach groups).
- Press releases to local media/press.
- Posters erected in local venues such as cafes, pub etc as appropriate in each area.
- Drop in sessions planned for stakeholders directly affected across the four proposed areas.
- Communications via LCD screens in council buildings;
- Written papers and presentations where appropriate.

3.5 The Council will also produce a smaller, summarised version of the business case (the 'Consultation Pack') which will provide the same information in a condensed form. A questionnaire will also be produced, following best practice from elsewhere, which will be used to gather views from all stakeholders to the proposal.

3.6 All documents will be published on the Council website and promoted to key groups through the methods outlined in Section 3 below.

## **4.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

4.1 To ensure a true reflection of the views of affected groups related to this consultation, it is important that particular groups of stakeholders are effectively targeted with communications about the proposal and given every opportunity to share their views.

4.2 The following groups will receive direct communications about the proposal to request their views:

- **All residents in the proposed Selective Licensing area**  
Questionnaire sent direct to the homes address of all residents living within the Selective Licensing area, accompanied by a covering letter and also a copy of the executive summary of the Business Case.
- **Elected Members and local Members of Parliament**  
The Business case and Consultation plan will be submitted to Cabinet for approval to go out to consultation. Following this the Elected members for the proposed areas and the four Members of Parliament and four parliamentary

Constituency Managers will be e-mailed detailing the key aspects of the proposal and either a paper produced and/or presentation to the two constituency areas where the schemes are located. This e-mail will invite any feedback /comments regarding the proposal. The same will be sent to the Leader of each of the political parties to cascade to their colleagues.

- **Businesses/services within the proposed designation areas in Wirral and in the immediately surrounding areas**

Mail drop - All properties within the proposed streets within the designated areas and in the immediately surrounding areas will be mail dropped an overview letter, executive summary of the business case. The letter will explain what the scheme is and what its potential implications are. The letter will encourage businesses and stakeholders to also visit the website to obtain further information and complete the questionnaire either online or they can request a paper copy if required. This letter also advises those interested to contact the Council for details of a number of drop in sessions to be held at various venues and various times of the day as detailed above.

- **Social Landlords**

All social landlords who operate in the designated areas or who could manage stock will be contacted directly by e-mail and advised of the consultation process, business case and will be invited to complete a questionnaire. An e-mail will be sent to all members of Wirral's Strategic Housing Partnership

- **Private Landlords, Letting Agents/Estate Agents and National and Local Landlord Associations**

Direct mail – all known landlords and letting agents and Estate Agents will be sent a letter explaining what the proposal is and how it will affect them as landlords. The letter will include links to the website where the full consultation document is available, and invites completion of the questionnaire.

Both the National Landlords Association, the Association of Residential Lettings Agents, the Guild of Residential Landlords, Residential Landlords Association and the North West Property Owners Association will be contacted directly by letter and where applicable, e-mail.

A separate invitation will be sent regarding a number of drop-in sessions to be held at various venues and various times of the day. These drop in sessions will be aimed predominately at those who are directly affected or are likely to be affected and will be informal so landlords or the public can call in at any time. The sessions will be held so that landlords can find out more about the proposal, ask any questions and provide any comments/feedback. Council staff will be on hand to answer any questions. A specific meeting will be held at the Wirral Landlords' Forum for known landlords in Wirral.

- **Landlords recorded on Housing Benefit Records**  
A mail out will be done on a phased basis over a four week period in line with Housing Benefit payment schedules to all landlords who have properties where Housing Benefit is being claimed. This will be in a letter form, directing them to the council website page.
  
- **Stakeholders, Partners & Community Groups in the proposed Designated areas**  
Community groups will be contacted by letter and/or e-mail with details of the proposal. They will be advised of the information available on the website and that drop in sessions will be held with details to be made available on the Council website.

Stakeholders and interested parties such as Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Community Action Wirral (CAW) Citizens' Advice Bureau and numerous others will be consulted directly through the Public Sector Board and other methods.

Whilst direct consultation will attempt to be as exhaustive as possible, any interested groups not already identified and consulted directly will also be encouraged to complete the questionnaire or make comments. Groups not consulted directly are considered likely to hear about the proposal through mediums such as the website, posters and local press releases.

- **Wirral Council Staff**  
An e-mail will be sent to relevant Departments/Teams to advise them of the proposal seeking comments. Relevant areas include but are limited to – Housing Benefits, Community Patrol, Supported Housing and Homelessness, Streetscene, Environmental Health, Strategic Planning and Development Control. For any team who may experience a significant impact from the proposal, a meeting can be arranged to discuss the implications and to provide an opportunity for Council officers to provide suggestions and feedback on the proposal. Information will be sent through to all staff via the Chief Executive's weekly staff e-mail bulletin.
  
- **All Other Residents in Wirral**  
Press releases will be issued to local media to promote the consultation. Posters will be placed around the proposed Selective Licensing areas advertising the consultation. The Council will create a micro site within the Council's own website where all information regarding the proposal will be posted. LCD screens in Council buildings will display information and highlight the consultation being undertaken. P Some key local venues (shops/cafes/pubs) will be asked to display poster/leaflets.

Information will be available on the council website so any people with internet access will be able to find out more about the proposal as well as completing an online questionnaire which also enables the opportunity to add comments.

Details will be made available on the website and posters, once they are confirmed, of the number of drop in sessions to be held in public places in order to make them as accessible as possible.

- 4.3 Further communication will be sent to a database of 46,000 resident email addresses with information related to the proposal and a direct link to the consultation questionnaire.

## **5.0 How issues raised will be dealt with as part of the consultation**

- 5.1 Throughout the consultation process a record of each consultation event or period that has been undertaken and what issues were raised from these will be formally logged. This will details the date of the consultation, what form the consultation took place, who was consulted and what were the results/issues raised. Different methods of communications will be used as part of the consultation process and a separate consultation report will be produced for each event to enable a 'portfolios' to be produced as one document at the end, with each element represented as a section.

- 5.2 Wirral is committed to ensuring all comments received are recorded and there is a clear audit trail of all decisions made and how consultation responses were taken into consideration and balanced with any evidence and specific information gathered. The consultation report will be published and placed on the website.

## **6.0 TIMESCALES AND REPORTING**

- 6.1 The timetable for component elements of the consultation is in the project plan attached.

**Appendix 1 – Wirral Consultation Plan methods of Consultation and Timetable**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>When</b>
Questionnaires and leaflets	Tenants, Residents, Accredited landlords, as well as letting/ managing agents and businesses/service providers in the area	Questionnaire and executive summary highlighted to all local residents, stakeholder and businesses also referral to full business case on website if required.	November-December 2014
Cabinet report	Cabinet Members	Cabinet report on Business Case and Consultation Plan for Approval to go out to consultation.	November 2014
E-mail/Letter Correspondence	Councillors Leaders of Three Political Parties Members of Parliament	E-mail/Letters sent detailing aspects of proposal and inviting feedback/comments.	November 2014
Written Paper/Presentation	Constituency Committees Public Sector Board	Information sent to all four constituency committees.  Written Paper and/or presentation to be distributed the two constituency committee and Public Sector Board on proposal seeking views from all partners	Dates of Constituency committees for Birkenhead and Wallasey to be inserted  Date of Public Sector Board Paper
Strategic Housing Partnership	Registered providers in proposed area and across Wirral	E-mail sent to all Registered Providers in Wirral who form the strategic Housing Partnership advising of the proposal and seeking views	November 2014



Landlord Working Group	Accredited Landlords and letting/ managing agents	Separate to questionnaire sent to all landlords - landlords invited to specifically comment on proposed component fee structure	November 2014
Wirral Council staff/Teams	All staff but particular emphasis on :-  Housing Benefits  Community Patrol  Supported Housing and Homelessness  Streetscene  Environmental Health  Strategic Planning and Development Management	E-mails sent direct to relevant staff and Project Officer and one to one meetings to take place if requested and Q & A session.	November-December 2015
National and Regional Landlord Agencies	National landlord Association,  Association of Residential Agents,  Guild of residential Landlords  Residential landlords Association  North West property Owners Association	Direct letters to all associations advising of proposal and ability to complete questionnaire and also of drop in sessions	November 2014

Landlord Link-Up newsletter	Known Landlords in Wirral	October 2014 Introductory Article January 2015 Article and Q & A	October 2014 and January 2015
Community Groups	Local community groups in the affected areas	Specific letters sent to known community groups operating in the affected areas, attendance of meetings if required.	December 2014
Press release and Posters	All Wirral stakeholders	Posters to be placed in service providers i.e. doctors, local venues (cafes/pubs)  Press release to be issue to local media	November 2014
Partner agencies	CAB  CAW	Direct letters/e-mails to advise of proposal and also direct to complete questionnaires and feedback. One to one meeting to be held if requested and Q & A session.	November 2014 – January 2015
Internet	Residents  Landlords  Tenants and residents across the borough  Community Groups  Service providers in the area	Information on Wirral website with contact details  Information distributed and obtained via social media	November- January 2015
Council LED Screens	All users of key Council public buildings	Information on LED screens at One Stop Shops, Libraries and Leisure Centres	November 2014- January 2015
“Have Your Say” Landlord reminder letter	Landlords	Reminder sent to Landlords who have not responded as a reminder that consultation would be ending soon	January 2015

Open forum sessions	Landlords, tenants and business within proposed designated area or likely to be affected	Sessions (daytime and evening) for all stakeholders in the area to attend, included Q & A Sessions	December 2014
Unknown landlords in affected areas	Landlords	<p>Letters sent to tenants to forward to landlords regarding the open forums, if there are no details available</p> <p>Council Tax database to remove owner occupiers. Send letters to 'The Landlord' to all remaining and empty properties.</p> <p>Ask Landlord Association / Letting Agents to advise their members, including those which may not be known to the Council.</p>	November – January 2015