

CABINET

9 JULY 2015

22 WIRRAL COUNCIL PLAN: A 2020 VISION

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report by the Chief Executive. Appended to the report was the Wirral Council Plan: A 2020 Vision for the Cabinet's consideration and approval. It was also proposed to refer the Plan to the meeting of the Council scheduled for 13 July 2015 for its consideration and ultimate approval.

The Council Plan articulated the ambition for Wirral and for the Council as an organisation. It identified the priority areas and outcomes for people and place and outlined the delivery approach.

The Council Plan was the key policy document of the Council and articulated the ambition for the organisation and the borough.

The Plan set out the Council's ambition related to following three priorities:

- Wirral was a place where the vulnerable were safe and protected, every child got a good start in life and older residents were respected and valued;
- Wirral was a place where employers wanted to invest and businesses thrived;
- Wirral had an attractive and sustainable environment, where good health and an excellent quality of life was enjoyed by everyone who lived there.

Underpinning the three priorities were twenty outcomes designed to be delivered by 2020.

The new Plan outlined how the Council would organise itself in order to deliver the stated ambitions. It would provide Member led leadership to communities, design services with residents, work closely with partners and influence regionally, nationally and internationally. The Council would need to organise itself appropriately to deliver the plan and drive further improvements to deliver the best outcomes for Wirral.

Delivery of the priorities and outcomes described in the Council Plan would be underpinned through the development and implementation of a business plan and strategies. Progress against the identified outcomes would be regularly reported and published.

In presenting the Wirral Plan to the Cabinet Councillor Phil Davies reported that the Council had come a long way over the last three years: It had inherited a £17m overspend and had been on the verge of intervention by Central Government.

In March 2015, following a period of intense partnership work with the Local Government Association (LGA) via a joint Improvement Board, the Council had been recognised as the Local Government Chronicle's 'Most Improved Council'.

The Council's improvement had been hailed as the fastest turnaround of any Council in the country. It had been championed by the LGA and was recognised as an example of best practice. Councillor Phil Davies informed that the Council's aim now was to move from normal to outstanding.

As a result the May Local Government Elections, the Council's Administration now had a clear mandate from the people of Wirral of their vision for Wirral.

As a progressive Administration, with social justice and economic prosperity as part of its core values, it considered that the time was now right to set out a long term (five years) Plan.

Councillor Phil Davies set out the content of the Wirral Council Plan. The Plan contained a long term vision for Wirral. The Council wanted Wirral to be a place where its residents and businesses thrived. The Plan was very much about outcomes.

This meant ensuring:

- Every child got the best possible start in life.
- Wirral residents were equipped with the skills to secure good quality jobs.
- Economic opportunities were created by attracting enterprise and investment.
- Everybody was treated with respect and dignity in older age.
- The Council strived to close the health inequalities gap.
- The environment was looked after so that future generations could enjoy it.

The Plan was divided into three main priorities:

- People
- Business
- Environment

It set out the Administration's ambitions but also included some specific targets in areas such as housing, jobs, investment, education and reducing poverty. Councillor Phil Davies informed that this would enable the Council to track progress and hold itself to account.

Councillor Phil Davies also informed that the Council's task had been made much harder by the Government's cuts over the past five years. The new Conservative Government would be in power for another five years and consequently, more cuts were expected. However, this would not be used as an excuse for doing nothing.

The Administration was pragmatic and it needed to reshape the Council and public services generally to make them more resilient. This would involve a massive culture change.

The Plan was much about new ways of working. Over the next five years the Council would need to look beyond organisational and geographical boundaries. This meant achieving maximum impact not just from the £200m which the Council would spend by 2020 but the £2bn which the public sector as a whole would spend.

Councillor Phil Davies reported that the Council would need to embrace new models of service delivery and work in partnership with other public bodies and across geographical boundaries and with neighbouring authorities. The Council would need to maximise the opportunities presented by devolution, become even more outward facing and replicate good practice from elsewhere.

The Council needed to be clear what its core business was and what things it would have to stop doing or ask others to deliver instead.

It was essential that the Council took its residents with it on this journey and ensured that it was constantly aware of local priorities. It would need to use the talents of its local communities to deliver more things themselves rather than always relying on public agencies to do this. This would be helped by devolving more powers and funding to communities via the Council's four Constituency Committees.

Councillor Phil Davies made reference to the staff which he informed was critical to delivering this Plan and the Council would need to ensure that its officers had the skills to enable the Council to achieve its priorities.

This Plan was about the Administration's high level ambitions and more detailed action plans would be produced in due course.

Following Councillor Phil Davies' presentation he invited each Member of the Cabinet to report on the elements of the Wirral Plan that were covered by their particular portfolio.

Each Member addressed the Cabinet. They informed that the Plan was upbeat and that it could be delivered. This was an exciting opportunity that was being provided to take forward the ambition to be an outstanding Council, new areas of service delivery that would be explored e.g. shared services, mutual and the need to develop and agree a commissioning strategy that would drive efficiencies and savings.

Reference was made to the need to provide good quality homes and this needed to include care homes and supported living as Wirral had an aging population. It was noted that people needed to feel safe and anti-social behaviour would be brought under control by working in partnership with the Police, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

It was noted that this five year Plan provided stability and would give investors the confidence to come to Wirral. It was hoped that maritime investment would increase.

The Council was looking to develop its high streets e.g. in West Kirby, Hoylake and Birkenhead and the Birkenhead Master Plan would be published soon. It was also hoped that the tourism offer could be developed. The Wirral Waters outline planning application (the biggest planning application ever submitted in the UK) had been approved and two projects were underway. There were also plans for an international Golf Resort at Hoylake and it was noted that the recent 'Three Queens' event had been very successful.

The Plan was a blue print, a statement of intent for vastly improved corporate governance. In the last three years the Council had changed from 'a basket case' to a Council that was 'a shining example' and a credit to the officers who worked for it.

It was noted that the Council had invested in ICT and it was now greatly improved.

Vulnerable and older people were highlighted in the Plan as was the partnership working that was well underway in the Department of Adult Social Services. Domestic violence was also highlighted as a priority to be dealt with.

Reference was made to the need to have a safe and affordable transport network on Wirral.

The Plan fitted in with the national expectations for children. They needed to be ready to start school. The Plan set high standards to be achieved as did OFSTED. This was important because children only got one chance to make a success of their lives. A good education process could lift people out of poverty and make them ready for work and life. Wirral had excellent staff in Children's Services and some of the best Head Teachers in the country and this was a good start for the implementation of the Plan. The Council was ambitious and the Cabinet was looking forward to better outcomes for children in future.

The Wirral Plan was a commitment, underpinned by Labour values, to change things for the better over the next five years. It would lead to healthier lives and address health inequalities in Wirral. The Council had won a national award 'Eat Well and Takeaway for Change'. This illustrated its commitment to tackling a huge problem by changing behaviours in respect of what people ate. The environment needed to be cleaner and greener, the housing stock and transport system required improvement and there needed to be a crack-down on anti-social behaviour. These were all being tackled through the Plan.

The Chief Executive informed that the Wirral Plan provided a clear outline of what needed to be achieved over the next five years. The Council would need to organise itself in a particular way to deliver the Plan. The Council was in a different place to where it had been three years ago and by 2020 it would be in a vastly different place to where it was now.

The Wirral Plan was outcome focused. The next step was to get the residents of Wirral on board as well as the Council's partners. The Chief Executive was impressed with the energy residents and communities had for making a difference to their own lives and he considered that the Council needed to build on this.

The Cabinet would begin to examine strategies and consider how to take the Plan forward to achieve the outcomes it wanted.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Wirral Council Plan as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved and referred to the meeting of the Council scheduled for 13 July 2015 for its approval.