



CABINET MEMBER - BUSINESS
AND TOURISM

COUNCILLOR PAT HACKETT

CABINET
MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2016

WIRRAL PLAN: A 2020 VISION -
UNDERPINNING STRATEGIES: THE
WIRRAL GROWTH PLAN

Councillor Pat Hackett, Cabinet Member Business and Tourism said:

“We want Wirral to have a vibrant, growing economy – one where Wirral people of all ages and backgrounds have the opportunity to get good, skilled, high-paying jobs. In our Wirral Plan we pledged to create that economy, through driving new investment, through supporting businesses to grow, through building new affordable housing and through attracting more visitors. This Growth Plan is a key part of delivering our 2020 Vision; it sets a clear path towards achieving our goals and improving residents’ lives for many years to come. I am proud to present it to Cabinet for approval.”

REPORT SUMMARY

The Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision sets out a shared partnership vision to improve outcomes for Wirral residents. Delivery of the priorities and outcomes described in the Plan are underpinned through the development and implementation of a set of key strategies and a Delivery Plan.

This report provides Cabinet with The Wirral Growth Plan; a key strategic document which articulates the ambition related to the Wirral Plan Business Priority:
“Wirral is a place where employers want to invest and businesses thrive”

The report aims to support Wirral businesses, attract new investment and improve the skills of local people so that all Wirral residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity and a good quality of life.

The Growth Plan aims to drive economic growth across the Borough and ensure that employment opportunities are accessible to all residents. As a result it affects all Wards within the Borough and therefore this report is considered a key decision

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet are requested to approve the Wirral Growth Plan as provided as an appendix to this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Wirral Growth Plan sets out how the ambitions and outcomes set out within the Business priority of the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision will be driven forward and achieved. The Growth Plan has been developed and endorsed by key partners including the Wirral Chamber of Commerce and Wirral Metropolitan College and will provide the framework for promoting sustainable growth and for supporting place shaping across the Borough

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Business priority of Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision includes seven pledges which will need to be delivered in order to achieve the overall outcomes. These include increasing inward investment, supporting small businesses to thrive and delivering a vibrant visitor economy. In addition there are pledges within the People and Environment priorities that are strongly linked to growth such as ensuring that young people are ready for work and the delivery of new homes.
- 2.2 It would have been possible to develop separate Plans for each of these pledges rather than combine them within the Wirral Growth Plan. This approach was considered but rejected as it is only by joining up and integrating the various elements of the pledges that we will be able to ensure that the opportunities for economic growth are maximised and that the benefits of that growth are accessible to Wirral residents.
- 2.3 Combining the range of pledges within the Growth Plan will enable a new approach to be taken – whilst recognising that the private sector will be the engine for growth, it will also provide for a focus on place shaping so that our places and communities work better than they have before.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Wirral's Investment Strategy has provided the framework for driving economic growth within the Borough for the last ten years. Whilst economic performance has been good the development of the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision, provided the context for a review of the Strategy and of its ambitions and it became clear that if the Borough was to meet its full growth potential then a new and bolder approach was needed.
- 3.2 Recognising that the potential for growth within Wirral is considerable, with key growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, marine and energy providing unprecedented opportunities, the Business Priority of the Wirral Plan identified seven pledges together with pledges relating to growth being included within the People and Environment priorities such as ensuring that young people are ready for work and the delivery of housing growth. The Wirral Growth Plan brings these pledges together and, based on a comprehensive analysis of the Borough's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, identifies how better linkage and integration will enable outcomes to be achieved that will

deliver sustainable growth and ensure that the benefits of this growth will be accessible to Wirral residents.

- 3.3 The Growth Plan also recognises that whilst the Council has a leadership role that joint working and partner involvement from all sectors will be critical. The Plan has a strong focus on private sector driven opportunity as not only are public sector resources limited, but it is clear that business knows how to lead business to deliver maximum impact.
- 3.4 Delivery of the Growth Plan will take place within the context of the recently agreed Devolution Deal with Government which sees the city region having control over an Investment Fund that is intended to unlock the economic potential of the area. Devolution will also give the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority more control over transport and housing budgets and increased responsibility over employment support, skills provision and the identification of strategic development opportunities.

3.5 Overview of the Growth Plan

Developed in partnership the Wirral Growth Plan includes the Vision that: “Wirral will be a place where employers want to invest, business thrives and high quality jobs are provided and where all our residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity and a good quality of life”.

The analysis of the Borough’s strengths and challenges together with a review of developer proposals, investor feedback, Chamber business enquiries and data analysis has identified four key spatial areas and eight thematic areas as providing the focus for the Growth Plan. In addition if the impact of the Growth Plan is to be maximised then integration of these areas together with partnership collaboration and alternative delivery models will be required. This approach is set out in the diagram overleaf.

The focus on integrating and improving delivery will support economic growth, but can also support the development of sustainable places that work for residents, businesses and investors – thereby stimulating further growth.

3.6 Summary of the key themes within the Growth Plan

Through the analysis and feedback work, four key spatial areas have been identified which will provide the short to medium term focus for growth, namely:

- Wirral Waters
- Birkenhead Town Centre
- Birkenhead Hinterland (the areas bordering Birkenhead Town Centre and Wirral Waters)
- The A41 Corridor

Viability is a significant issue for employment uses in Wirral and the Core Strategy notes that given the low rental and rateable values of industrial and office uses that public sector intervention is likely to be needed to bring forward development. Prioritisation of key sites will enable focused support to be provided to address market failure where necessary and to support achieving

the Business Pledge outcomes.

The Growth Plan also identifies eight key action areas that are critical to transforming Wirral's economy over the next five years and beyond. Much greater integration between these action areas and with partners will be required to deliver the step change that will deliver better outcomes for Wirral. The action areas are:

- Growing Competitive Businesses
- Increasing Employment – Greater Job Opportunities
- Workforce Skills match Business Needs
- Increase Inward Investment
- Tourism – Develop a vibrant tourism economy
- Transport
- Housing Growth
- Assets

3.7 Governance

In line with the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision, the Council will provide the strategic lead for Wirral's sustainable growth, however strong input and involvement from partners will underpin its delivery. This will be progressed through the Wirral Growth Board (previously the Investment Strategy Board) which includes representatives from across the private sector and which will provide an overseeing role, ensuring that the stated growth outcomes of the Wirral Plan are delivered on time and in a coordinated manner.

The Growth Plan is attached as an appendix to this report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council has identified that growth, through increased Business Rates income and increased Council Tax revenue from the building of new homes are key to providing financial sustainability and meeting the Council's Budget funding gap. Allied to this is the further development of asset management in order to better utilise public sector assets to generate revenue, including capital receipts through the sale of surplus assets, and to achieve efficiencies in running costs, including from the shared use of buildings. As schemes / projects are developed from the Growth Plan the financial implications will be identified as part of the project planning.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. As schemes / projects are developed the legal implications will be identified as part of the project plan.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Growth Plan will be co-ordinated by existing staff resource, mainly from the Investment Strategy team, but supported by staff from across the Council. Every effort will be made to seek partner resource to support the delivery of

the Plan.

- 6.2 Existing economic data tools will be utilised to inform the economic baseline and profile which will underpin the Plan and provide the basis for on-going evaluation. Data will be sourced both internally and externally to enhance the current content of the Economic Profile. This will include an understanding of the housing market in Wirral.
- 6.3 The Delivery element of the Growth Plan will include the need to develop detailed business cases / appraisals for the implementation of some of the activities, for example the operation of the Wirral Waters EZ Investment Fund. The effective implementation of the Growth Plan may require additional resources which will be identified as the detailed delivery plans are developed. The principle will be adopted that wherever possible any increase in resource need will be met from the private sector or from funding associated with particular schemes.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Corporate Risk Register will be refreshed in line with the new Wirral Plan developments to ensure that any risks to delivery are understood and mitigating actions are put in place as appropriate.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This report is consistent with the principles of the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision which was developed following full consultation with partner organisations and residents. The Wirral Growth Plan has also been informed by consultation which has taken place with a number of public and private sector partners and with local businesses.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The potential impact has been reviewed with regard to equality and the impact review can be found at:
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/>

REPORT AUTHOR: **Sally Shah**
Investment Strategy Manager
telephone: (0151) 691 8148
email: sallyshah@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Wirral Growth Plan

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date