

# WIRRAL GROWTH PLAN

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THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP

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## FOREWORD

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### Cllr Pat Hackett – Cabinet Member for Business and Tourism

Wirral stands on the threshold of a new era in its economic history, and has the potential to take advantage of significant opportunity.

The Council has worked closely with all its partners to produce a 5 year Growth Plan with a focus on a long term vision for Wirral to understand our place and how we want it to look in 2035.

We must continue to support the world-class businesses that make a vital contribution to the Liverpool City Regions economy today. Yet we also need to look to the future – and support the new sectors that will generate jobs and growth in the years ahead.

A number of sectors have been highlighted as showing significant growth potential. Wirral has become home to a growing concentration of businesses who are using the latest technology within manufacturing, particularly within the low carbon/ energy sectors but its more traditional sectors. With the right support, prosperity and jobs created in these three key sectors and our other more established sectors will have a knock-on effect elsewhere – in housing, retail, in leisure and in the critical professional services market, where those who work in property, architecture and

construction will be able to take advantage of opportunities to develop the Boroughs infrastructure within projects at Wirral Waters, Birkenhead Town Centre, A41 Employment Corridor and within other areas of opportunity. In order to maximise this growth potential, our visitor economy will grow and we will use the power of our waterfront overlooking one of the World's most famous heritage sites, to ensure that Wirral truly is a place to live, work and crucial part of the Liverpool City Region.

This plan will therefore deliver benefits that will be felt across Wirral and beyond but to succeed, we need the active and ongoing participation of local businesses, communities and other partners to be part of delivering significant and sustainable growth.



A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Pat Hackett', written over a dark background.

**Pat Hackett**  
Cabinet Member for  
Business and Tourism

## Paula Basnett Chief Executive of Wirral Chamber of Commerce – Partner Lead for Tourism and Business Growth

Wirral Chamber of Commerce represents the voice of Wirral's business community, a diverse community built on innovation, enterprise through established multi-national market leaders, a growing SME sector, and the many new business start-ups.

We have developed strong partnerships with both public and private sectors in working towards a common goal. That goal is clear. The partnership has recognised the challenges faced, and through the 2020 Vision, we have set priorities to encourage business aspirations and develop a sustainable economy, one able to grow. This will be achieved through focused initiatives for business growth, employment creation, skill development and supporting investment on local, national and international levels.

By introducing strategies for growth, Wirral will be home to vibrant businesses supported and fuelled by an agenda for a high growth, innovation driven economy both successful and competitive in worldwide markets.

We will look to support this, but its outcome will be driven by the dynamism of our businesses and by fostering new links with young, entrepreneurial enterprises.

Wirral Chamber of Commerce has four key themes - engage, inspire develop, and grow – we will support the 2020 Vision to ensure that together we create the right conditions for business to grow.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Paula Basnett in white ink.

**Paula Basnett**  
Chief Executive of  
Wirral Chamber of Commerce

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Wirral Plan sets out our key ambitions for the Borough and its goals are shared by partners from across all sectors. The Wirral Partnership recognises that we will need to work differently to deliver these goals and the outcomes set out in the Plan, so that Wirral becomes a place where people and businesses thrive.

Taking a long term look at Wirral's growth potential is vital to understand the direction we need to take to get there. We know that the Borough has a number of significant opportunities for growth and the Council and its partners need to build and capitalise on these so that we can transform Wirral's economy over the coming years.

The Vision is for sustainable, accelerated economic growth based on a more connected, talented Borough where all our residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity and a good quality of life in a high quality environment.

Achieving this will require more than a focus on economic growth – it means that we will need to ensure that we fully understand our communities so that we and our partners can support them to grow to meet their potential. This includes integrating and connecting services to support the development of place – the Growth Plan will therefore provide the strategic framework in which place shaping will be taken forward.

The Wirral economic 'story' is already 150 years old with manufacturing as its cornerstone at both the start of this journey and now. Whilst the last 40 years saw a decline in this sector there has been steady growth and recovery over the last few years and, with the renaissance of the River Mersey, manufacturing will once again play a major part in Wirral's fortunes, as the area takes advantage of emerging technologies in identified growth sectors.

Nowhere else has the maritime infrastructure and spatial opportunity to capitalise on the growth of these sectors and the next five years has the potential to be transformational for the people of Wirral - defining the future for residents and businesses for the next three generations.

The private sector will be the engine for growth and our key growth sectors will play a prominent role in driving this. With nationally significant projects such as Wirral Waters, a thriving visitor economy and housing market potential, the future is bright for Wirral. Last year's economic growth figures showed how Wirral's economy grew as fast as anywhere in the country but the productivity of our economy is low. That is why supporting our emerging sectors as well as investing in skills that meet our workforce needs is so important.

One of Wirral's key strengths is its strong growth in both business start-up rates and its thriving small business population. Since 2011 Wirral has contributed some 33% of the total increase in enterprises across the Liverpool City Region and Birkenhead in particular is becoming an increasingly attractive place to do business. Driving growth also means capitalising on the Visitor Economy. This sector is already strong but could support the revitalisation of the fortunes of Birkenhead by capitalising on the power of the River frontage where the best view of one of the most famous Waterfronts in the world can be seen.

The quality of the Borough's housing offer is also critical if we are going to make the most of Wirral's offer as a place to work, live and enjoy.

Wirral recognises that confidence and certainty are key conditions for harnessing investment and growth. Our key message to our local communities, our businesses and our committed investors and our future investors is that Wirral is more confident than ever.

This document sets out Wirral's plans to promote growth and to support Place shaping across the Borough. Between now and 2020 we will enable the delivery of key growth projects and lay the foundations of sustainable economic growth in years after this.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Growth Plan is to attract and guide investment into Wirral, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable growth from local opportunities, benefiting Wirral's communities, businesses and residents. In doing this it will provide the framework to develop our strategic approach to Place shaping so that our places work better than they have before.

Growth is important to Wirral because:

- It improves the quality of life of our residents
- Enables our economically active workforce to increase in order to maintain a sustainable and balanced population as people live longer
- In a time of declining central funding for local services, growth is essential to sustaining vital public services
- Standing still whilst other places grow is a backwards step for Wirral

The Growth Plan will feed into the work of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the delivery of the Northern Powerhouse agenda, including supporting the re-balancing of the economy, and the implementation of the Devolution Deal agreed with Government in November 2015.

The aim of the Growth Plan is to support the achievement of the Business pledges and related outcomes within the Wirral Plan – Vision 2020 as well as contributing to the achievement of other pledges within the Environment and People priorities.

In delivering the Business related outcomes of the 2020 Vision the Growth Plan for Wirral will seek to:

- Create a shared ambition for growth and investment across businesses, communities and our public sector partners
- Provide the framework for place shaping across the Borough so that, working with partners and residents, we develop sustainable communities where people want to live, invest, work and visit
- Support the delivery of infrastructure and housing to enable growth to take place
- Further grow the visitor economy in Wirral to take advantage of a unique and special location
- Increase the scale, quality and sustainability of economic opportunity in Wirral
- Ensure participation and access to these opportunities for local residents
- Create a more dynamic and growth focused business population with increased value added and productivity
- Increase levels of education and skills within the workforce to foster growth and upskill our residents
- Ensure better accessibility to jobs outside of the Borough, particularly in the North Wales area
- Tackle significant infrastructure deficits and address transport network pinch points to enable more strategy connectivity.

## APPROACH

The Council will provide a clear leadership role in driving forward the development and delivery of the Growth Plan, however involvement, joint working and integration with partners will be critical if the Vision 2020 pledges are to be achieved. The Plan will have 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 and the Growth Plan will ensure that private sector resources are leveraged to deliver maximum impact.

The preparation of Wirral's Core Strategy Local Plan as the Council's statutory land use plan for the Borough is fundamental to the Council's strategic planning process as it sets out how the area will grow and develop over the next 15 years. The Growth Plan is key in outlining how the Council will lead and work with partners to deliver the Core Strategy as the key enabling Plan to deliver sustainable growth.

In order to deliver the Growth Plan outcomes and to set the framework for place shaping across the Borough it will be necessary to understand the strengths and opportunities that offer potential for further economic growth together with the challenges and threats that could limit this. This evidence needs to be considered together with intelligence from our various 'communities' in order to ensure that our services and those of our partners reflect that understanding and are integrated to enable Wirral's 'places' to work well and to be sustainable.

Key issues are set out in Figure 1 with strengths reflecting the potential for growth in key sectors, recent strong economic performance, workforce skills and the potential for wider collaboration with partners at different levels – both locally and across the city region.

Whilst there are a number of challenges and threats identified, the Growth Plan will support a delivery approach that not only has a clear market focus but which equally enables integration and linkage across areas such as housing, skills, tourism etc. This will enable many of those challenges/threats to be overcome as they can also represent significant potential opportunities for growth.

For example there are opportunities to improve the housing offer and to further develop technology as a key driver of competitive advantage. In addition whilst low commercial rental levels gives rise to issues of viability for new developments, it also provides an opportunity in the short term to attract investment as it gives the Borough a competitive advantage.

## STRENGTHS

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- A growing economy closing the productivity gap between Wirral and the North West and therefore a key player within the Northern Powerhouse
- A revived dock system which reflects its original strengths and is capitalising on new and innovative opportunities
- Enabling our residents to take advantage of new employment opportunities both in Wirral and further afield
- Supporting higher value growth; enabling export opportunities and diversification into new sectors
- Good track record of enabling residents to secure appropriate and affordable housing
- Good track record of attracting investment into the Borough
- Driving growth within one of the UKs most dynamic small business sectors
- Active business support organisations – Chamber and sector bodies – Mersey Maritime
- Strong Visitor Economy
- Good relationships between local college, providers and business support functions
- High level of skills in parts of the existing workforce.

## WEAKNESSES

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- Low economic productivity – Lowest GVA per head in England.
- Low commercial property values
- Evidence of market failure and viability constraints and lack of occupier confidence
- Constrained development sites
- Limited capacity of existing older infrastructure
- Low jobs density ratio
- Lower than average employment rates compared to the North West and England
- High levels of deprivation and economic inactivity within the East of the Borough
- Entrenched numbers of residents who are out of work due to health related issues.
- Lack of modern quality business space.
- Poorly performing town centres
- Lack of higher value jobs in the Borough
- Large net daily migration of workers out of the Borough for employment purposes
- Numbers of young people not gaining Level 2 Maths and English, affecting the scope of the vocational offer
- Declining working age population

## OPPORTUNITIES

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- A rejuvenated principal town centre (Birkenhead) and better performing local town centres.
- Improvement in infrastructure - both transport and IT to deliver growth.
- Increase value in emerging sectors – opportunity to increase commercial rental levels
- Deriving maximum benefit from Wirral's waterfront locations
- Utilising the port infrastructure to drive investment as a unique investment location for growth sectors – energy, advanced manufacturing, civil nuclear
- Delivering the UK's major regeneration opportunity - Wirral Waters
- Deriving better value out of Wirral's advanced manufacturing expertise to capture growth
- Driving investment in housing and responding to demand for private sector housing growth
- Increasing the quality and value of emerging sectors such as Digital & Creative, Health, Fin & Prof
- Devolution provides a staged approach to more locally controlled adult skills budgets and greater influence over accessing European and transport funding to support the aims of the Growth Plan.
- Strategic sites included in the Single City Region Framework

## THREATS

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- A lack of coordinated approach to delivering growth by relevant Wirral stakeholders
- Lack of strategic approach to place shaping
- Limited resources
- Infrastructure pressures and constraints eg. Assets and Technology
- Strategic approach needed to consider the balance between the supply and demand issues regarding employment land and housing sites
- The number of people claiming working age benefits does not reduce in line with growth
- Failing to supply a workforce skilled to meet future employer demand.
- Further reductions in adult skills budgets.
- Managing employer expectations regarding skills provision
- Negative perceptions of the Borough as a place to do business
- Land availability within the existing urban areas

## **POLICY CONTEXT FOR GROWTH**

Wirral has a population of 320,900, an economy with a value of some £3.9bn and sits within the heart of the Liverpool City Region (LCR). In 2013 Wirral was at the forefront of establishing the Combined Authority for the city region working with partner authorities and the LEP to strengthen governance and maximise opportunities for growth.

This approach underpinned the recently agreed Devolution Deal with Government which sees the LCR having control over a £900m investment fund which is intended to help unlock the huge economic potential of the River Mersey and the new Liverpool2 deep water terminal as well as maximising the opportunities from HS2. The Devolution Deal will also give the Combined Authority more control over local transport budgets, franchised bus services and increased responsibility over employment support, skills provision and the identification of strategic development opportunities.

The LCR consistently has growth rates well above the national average and an economy that is more resilient now compared to the past and is well positioned to capitalise on the strengthening UK economy. This is reflected in the LCR Growth Prospectus that provides the strategic, over-arching ambition of the LCR and which is complemented by the European Strategic Investment Plan for the 2014-2020 European Programme period as well as a Strategic Economic Plan which details key investments that are necessary for growth to occur.

The LCR Local Enterprise Partnership has identified four key priorities for growth – Low Carbon, SuperPort, Knowledge and Innovation, and the Visitor Economy. These are considered transformational actions that reflect the LCR's

strengths which together with its unique mix of assets and market facing opportunities will lead to growth in GVA and jobs, increased productivity and a rebalanced economy with a reduced emphasis on public sector employment. The Wirral Growth sectors of advanced manufacturing, energy, offshore wind and civil nuclear have been identified by city region research as underpinning these four key priority areas.

The Government's objective of rebalancing the economy of the UK through a focus on the Northern Powerhouse provides a strong framework within which the LCR and Wirral will deliver growth. For instance the LCR is a prominent partner within the Transport for the North grouping which will identify the transformational infrastructure schemes needed to radically improve connectivity across the North of England.

Wirral has been a key player in developing the Atlantic Gateway strategy which recognises the potential for growth linked to the maritime, port and energy sectors. By harnessing the unique natural qualities of the Mersey and linking assets a broader economic growth programme can be delivered that reflects Wirral's position as a Northern Powerhouse gateway to global markets and builds on the opportunities generated by Liverpool2 Deepwater port, the Manchester Ship Canal and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

This strategic context reflects the key drivers and opportunities for growth within Wirral's economy and provides the context at both city region, national and international level in which Wirral's Growth Plan will operate.

## VISION FOR WIRRAL

This Growth Plan and the planned activity over the next 12 months will help foster investor confidence, clearly showing where we want to go and how we are going to get there.

'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 2020 Vision for Wirral builds on the Boroughs strengths and opportunities to become:

- An economy with sustained growth rate that is faster than the UK
- A global reputation in advanced manufacturing, low carbon, energy and maritime
- Increased value in the rest of the economy, particularly in the visitor economy, health, leisure and the business and professional services
- An economy that plays a leading role within the Liverpool City Region
- An economy that supports innovation and entrepreneurship
- An aspirational workforce with world class skills, meeting the needs of business for the future and supporting the competitiveness of Wirral's businesses
- A better connected borough with high quality and resilient transport and ICT infrastructure
- A high quality housing stock that meets the needs of Wirral's growing and changing population

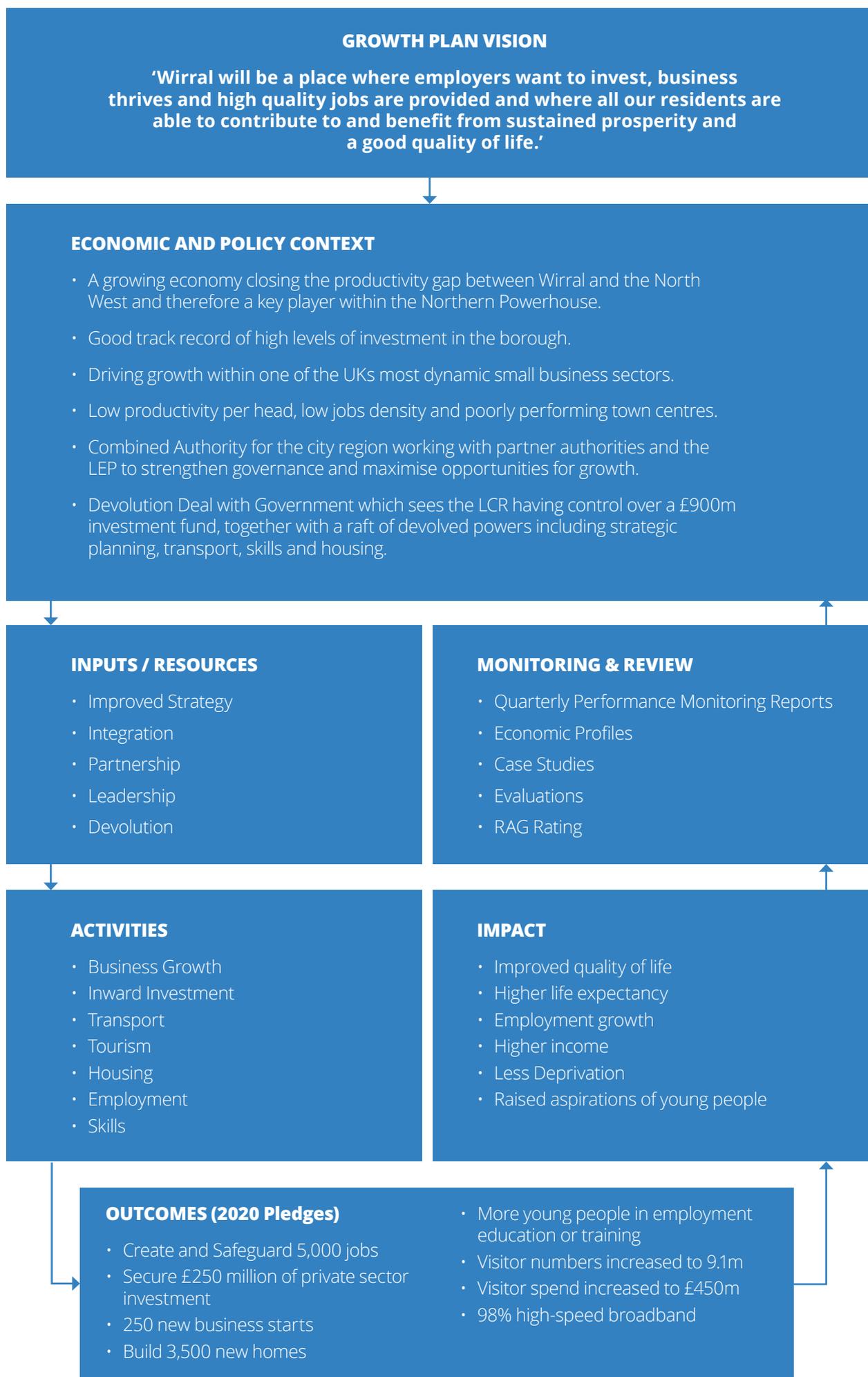
## PLAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The preparation of the Plan has been carried out within the context of the Wirral 2020 Vision and reflects feedback and input from a range of partners in order to capture linkages between all elements of the Plan that will deliver growth for the Borough. This has provided a 'logic chain' that has included:

- An analysis and understanding of the context for the Plan
- The development of a vision and spatial and thematic priorities to deliver outcomes
- The basis upon which to establish the necessary organisational requirements to progress co-ordinated and connected delivery together with appropriate monitoring and review.

This has resulted in the 'logic chain' as set out in Figure 2 below which identifies the causal connection between the vision, the context, inputs, activities, outputs and impacts.

The logic chain will also provide the framework to inform future evaluation of the Growth Plan and its impact on the economic context of the Borough.







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# WHAT WE KNOW

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## CONTEXT



POPULATION OF  
**320,900**

CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE



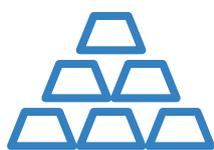
WORKING  
AGE



OLDER  
PEOPLE



## ECONOMY



**£3.9BN**  
ECONOMIC VALUE  
IN 2013



ENGLAND **£25,367** NORTH WEST **£21,011**  
MERSEYSIDE **£18,621** WIRRAL **£13,589**

**11%**

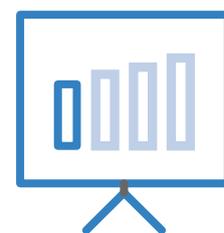
**GVA PER HEAD**  
IMPROVED BY 11%  
OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS -  
**HIGHER THAN THE**  
**MERSEYSIDE AVERAGE**

## EMPLOYMENT

**25,530** 13.1% RESIDENTS CLAIMING OUT-OF-WORK BENEFITS



**58** JOBS FOR EVERY 100 PEOPLE



### EMPLOYMENT RATE

**67.4%** **66.4%** **70.1%** **73.3%**  
WIRRAL LCR N.WEST ENGLAND

## BUSINESS

**8,220**

TOTAL  
ENTERPRISES

INCREASED BY  
**820**  
SINCE 2014



**MICRO  
BUSINESSES**  
0-9  
EMPLOYEES



**SMALL  
BUSINESSES**  
10-49  
EMPLOYEES



**MEDIUM  
BUSINESSES**  
50-249  
EMPLOYEES



**LARGE  
BUSINESSES**  
250+  
EMPLOYEES

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# THE SCOPE OF THE GROWTH PLAN - PLACE MAKING

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**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.**

Further consultation and workshop sessions with key partners has shown that if the impact of the Growth Plan is to be maximised then integration of these areas together with partnership collaboration and alternative delivery models is essential. This approach is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

The focus on integrating and improving delivery as set out in Figure 3 below will support economic growth but can also support the development of sustainable places that work for residents, businesses and investors – thereby stimulating further growth.

In order to make a place work, you need to 'know that place' and have a deep understanding not only of what and who is there, but what will attract new people, investment and activities. This includes understanding the history of a place and likely trends and changes in the future. It is also about talking to communities, individuals and businesses i.e. the beneficiaries who live in places, invest in places, learn in places and who take their leisure time there.

Understanding and using this information enables change to both happen and be managed to improve and enhance places. Delivery of the Growth Plan through integration and new delivery models will support place making through:

- Market focus - clear evidence and understanding of markets from business/ investment to housing through to other demands/ opportunities such as learning and leisure. Use of LCR data that provides insight into business markets and sectors
- Strategic approach - using the Core Strategy Local Plan/ Growth Plan and other inter-linking strategies such as housing, transport and the Single City Region Framework
- Planning the supply - understanding need and demand to plan for new housing, employment and leisure etc - ensuring the best use of public sector assets and skills
- Partnership - working across the public and private sectors and macro and micro levels to plan. Where appropriate working city regionally or locally to enable stakeholders plans where they fit the strategy - including developers/ house builders and other organisations to set the framework for what partners want to see and where
- Delivery - commissioning and delivery with partners
- Monitor and review - is the approach working? If not what needs to change

The Council, through the Growth Plan, will therefore lead the development of a much more focussed strategic approach to support our neighbourhoods and the built environments to develop sustainable places where people want to live, invest and visit.

Infrastructure plan | Financial Planning | Budget / Income | Partnership / Collaboration | Core



**Business Growth:**

New business  
Sector growth  
Export  
Business space

**Employment:**

Access  
Engagement  
Upskill

**Housing Growth:**

New sites  
Existing sites  
Enabling  
Marketing

**Transport:**

Efficient networks  
Access  
Sustainability

**Inward Investment:**

Attracting new business  
Marketing place  
Supply chain growth

**Tourism:**

Events  
Place marketing  
Strong businesses

**Skills:**

Skills for growth  
Skill gaps  
Meeting business needs  
Links to schools

**“ In order to make a place work, you need to ‘know that place’ and have a deep understanding not only of what and who is there, but what will attract new people, investment and activities ”**

An aerial photograph of the Wirral Peninsula, showing a dense urban area with a large river and industrial zones. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'DELIVERING THE STRATEGY - WIRRAL'S MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AREAS' is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the lower half of the image. Two thin white horizontal lines are positioned above and below the text.

**DELIVERING  
THE STRATEGY -  
WIRRAL'S MAJOR  
DEVELOPMENT  
AREAS**

**Analysis of employment land availability, business space and feedback from developers and investors has led to the identification of four key spatial areas that will provide the short to medium term focus for growth. This approach aligns with the emerging LCR Capital Commissioning Framework which links a number of strategies and plans (such as the Local Growth Plan) and national policy drivers (such as Enterprise Zones) to create clear commissioning priorities.**

Analysis of employment land availability, business space and feedback from developers and investors has led to the identification of four key spatial areas that will provide the short to medium term focus for growth. This approach aligns with the emerging LCR Capital Commissioning Framework which links a number of strategies and plans (such as the Local Growth Plan) and national policy drivers (such as Enterprise Zones) to create clear commissioning priorities.

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 target of some 200,000 sqm of modern employment floorspace over the next five years. A LCR joint housing and employment land study will be progressed to ensure needs and supply are balanced and issues understood within the context of Wirral's Growth Plan.

Alternative delivery approaches will also be put in place to ensure that any public sector investment is carried out in a manner that supports longer term viability thereby enabling market-led development to take place in the

future, reducing the reliance on scarce public sector resources.

## **WIRRAL WATERS**

Wirral Waters is a private sector development led by Peel Holdings that has Enterprise Zone status and is noted within LCR plans as a preferred site for inward investment. The 18 million sq ft scheme is a 30 year mixed use development which represents a £4.5bn investment with the potential to deliver up to 20,000 jobs. The East Float scheme was granted planning permission in 2012 and has significant potential to deliver both housing and economic growth.

A 60,000sq ft Grade A office development and a dedicated Built Environment Campus for the Wirral Metropolitan College have both now opened and there are plans for a further office development, housing and a Maritime Knowledge Hub being developed. At West Float a proposed £42m investment in a 17,000sqm building serving the civil nuclear sector was granted planning permission in 2015 with further development proposed for a Marine and Energy Supplier Park. An Investment Fund has also been agreed that will see the business rate uplift being used to reinvest into catalyst schemes across the area with the potential to stimulate growth by up to £47m.

## **BIRKENHEAD TOWN CENTRE**

Birkenhead Town Centre is underperforming but has the potential to revitalise itself over the coming years. Recent pressure on the retail sector and high streets nationally and competition from other centres and out-of-town facilities has led to the closure of some businesses but there are opportunities to re-shape the Town Centre and to look at how premises are marketed as employment spaces

alongside a refresh of the leisure and cultural offer of the Town. A fast growing Chamber of Commerce is currently proposing the setting up of a Business Improvement District and, if successful, this will provide a vehicle to bring businesses together to plan for future success collectively and to decide how the town centre can provide a sustainable long-term trading environment.

Proposals are currently being considered in respect to an initial phase of redevelopment of the leisure offer and a wider master planning exercise, progressed with partners, will enable this development to be linked with more comprehensive proposals.

### **BIRKENHEAD HINTERLAND**

The areas bordering Birkenhead and Wirral Waters are critical not only to ensuring that development potential is maximised, but that benefits are linked to and impact on a wider area. Key sites include the Hind Street area which is currently underused and dominated by disused railway track and gasworks, but has the potential to be a gateway site marking the arrival into Birkenhead from the Mersey Tunnel and the A41.

The Woodside area occupies an important and pivotal position with strong regeneration potential. It offers one of the world's most recognisable views of the Liverpool Waterfront and the masterplan for the area proposes a range of residential, commercial, tourism and leisure uses. This will also enable linkages between the waterfront and the centre of Birkenhead to be strengthened and provide further opportunities for growing the tourism economy.

The regeneration areas neighbouring Wirral Waters and Birkenhead offer opportunities to ensure that both developments are complemented through improved access and linkage – there is a clear need to ensure that the opportunities of these areas is fully captured through a master planning exercise.

### **A41 CORRIDOR**

The A41 is the main arterial highway through the key employment areas of Wirral, including Birkenhead Town Centre, Cammell Lairds, Port Sunlight and the International Business Park and presents a number of development opportunities which will need to be carefully co-ordinated in line with the capacity of local infrastructure. Work has previously taken place to deliver improvements through a programme of environmental enhancements to the corridor and recently the Council has enabled developers to bring forward two supplier parks to serve the growing energy sector supply chain

**“ Prioritisation of key sites will enable focused support to be provided to address market failure where necessary and to support achieving the target of some 200,000 sqm of modern employment floorspace over the next five years ”**



# GROWTH PLAN ACTION AREAS

**We have identified eight key action areas that are critical to transforming Wirral's economy over the next five years and beyond. We need to develop far more integration between these action areas in order to deliver the step change to achieve better outcomes for Wirral. The actions plans will be partnership focussed, and clearly set out how this integration will be achieved within the context of the overall Wirral Plan.**

### **GROWING COMPETITIVE BUSINESSES**

We are committed to creating the best possible environment for business growth, and to be as business friendly as possible. Our aim is to realise Wirral's vast economic potential by further strengthening our competitiveness, encouraging entrepreneurship, expanding our business base and unlocking private sector growth.

We will work with our partners, including Wirral Chamber of Commerce and Mersey Maritime to ensure that the business support framework in Wirral continues to offer Wirral companies the best level of support

#### **What do we already know:**

Wirral's business base has flourished over recent years and currently has 8,220 enterprises, 88% of which are small businesses with 0-4 employees. Wirral nevertheless still has the lowest job density ratio in the Liverpool City Region with 58 jobs per 100 residents. This highlights the significant shortage of jobs in Wirral and although our business start-up performance is performing well, job creation is the key to boosting the local economy.

How are we going to get there:

- Create a more dynamic and growth focused business population
- Raise the level of business starts
- Increase growth aspiration, skills and

- competence among business leaders
- Improve productivity and competitiveness
- Encourage diversification into emerging markets
- Increase the scale of export activity and the number of businesses that export their goods and services
- Promote supply chain development activity in key sectors

#### **How we will measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will refresh the Business Support Framework in Wirral and review the Council's collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure we maximise resources by enhancing current and future delivery models to support business growth
- We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the LCR Combined Authority to ensure that the Framework responds to business needs and links to activity and resources across the city region
- We will support the delivery of an additional 250 new businesses

### **INCREASING EMPLOYMENT - GREATER JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Working with our partners we will ensure that we increase the quality, number and range of jobs in Wirral so that all our residents can find local employment opportunities. In particular we will seek to encourage more young people into work who are currently not in employment, education or training.

#### **What do we already know:**

Wirral has an ageing population with a lower than average working age population at 60.9% of the overall total. Population projections show that by 2037 Wirral's total population will stand at 331,200. This is a 3.4% increase over 25 years. The projections also show that the age bands with the highest increases in population are

those aged 65 and over, with an increase of 30,000 older people by 2037. Wirral's working age population is forecasted to decline by 19,000 over the next 25 years, whilst the number of young people in the Borough will remain the same.

The total number of jobs in the Borough currently stands at 113,000, which is our highest figure for 8 years. Our average weekly wage is over £485 per week for people working here and £498 for people living here. These figures are above the North West average for the first time ever. Our economy continues to grow, with a faster reduction in JSA claimants than anywhere in the City Region.

Wirral nevertheless still has 25,530 residents claiming an out-of-work benefit which is higher than regional and national averages at a rate of 13.1% and 2,500 people claiming the not in work element of Universal Credit.

#### **How are we going to get there:**

- We will ensure that those residents furthest away from work including those with health conditions and/or disabilities have the right support to access employment – this will include implementing our Health Related Worklessness programme which has been recognised nationally as a transformational project
- We will build growth in target sectors such as energy and advanced manufacturing where Wirral has unmatched potential
- Through the Devolution Deal with Government we will work through the Combined Authority to co-design and then co-commission with DWP the future employment support for harder to reach claimants
- Work with the Combined Authority to identify strategic employment sites for inclusion in the proposed Single City Region Framework

#### **How we will measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will create and safeguard 5,000 jobs by 2020
- We will see more people in work by 2020

#### **WORKFORCE SKILLS MATCH BUSINESS NEEDS**

Ensuring that our residents have the skills that will support existing businesses and attract new investment will be essential in ensuring that our economy can grow sustainably. To this end we will continue to work with our partners in education and training to identify demand and future growth needs in order to ensure that their provision is aligned to meet that need. Equally we will work with our private sector businesses to engage them in supporting their workforce to develop and improve their skills in order to boost productivity.

We will also continue to work through the Combined Authority and the LCR Employment and Skills Board to increase the responsiveness of the skills system at the local level. Through the Devolution Deal we will move to set and locally commission outcomes from the 19+ adult skills budget from 2016/17. Strong links will be developed with schools to ensure that our young people are informed of the local growth opportunities and of the skills required to access these opportunities. This will include active support for initiatives such as the Young Chamber.

#### **What do we already know:**

The Liverpool City Region Skills for Growth Agreements provide a strong framework in which to consider skills needs within our key growth sectors such as – advanced manufacturing, low carbon, the visitor economy. Significant activity is already undertaken to meet

the skills needs of businesses but policy constraints have resulted in a reduction in scope for training particularly for those aged over 19 and unemployed residents in need of short focused pre-recruitment support.

How are we going to get there:

- We will continue to build on our partnerships organisations such as Wirral Chamber, Wirral Metropolitan College and the universities across the city region
- We will build on the national skills survey, gain local insight through a skills survey with business and through analysis of the current labour market profile in order to develop a workforce skills delivery plan
- Through the Devolution negotiations we will work transform the delivery infrastructure to be more responsive to local employer and economic growth priorities, to enable greater specialisation and support a more highly skilled and appropriately qualified workforce

#### **How we will measure if we are getting it right:**

- An accurate evidence base will be in place to inform decision making providing both quantitative and qualitative data
- We will know what skills business need and that our residents are equipped to meet the
- Local businesses will be engaged and participating in the development of skills

### **INCREASE INWARD INVESTMENT**

In order to continue to grow our economy we will identify local, national and international opportunities to bring more investment into the Borough. We will have a clear focus on key growth sectors and aim to become a world class location for investment in those sectors, taking advantage of having one of the UKs strongest small business sectors and our unique

geographical position at the Western gateway to UK and Europe.

#### **What do we already know:**

Our economy today has a total value of around £3.9 billion per year, its highest ever value and comprising 15% of the Merseyside total. We are already home to significant international businesses, such as Unilever and the world-famous Cammell Laird shipbuilders. The Borough's economy also faces challenges, including the lowest GVA per head in England at £12,482, although between 2012-13 Wirral's 7% annual increase in GVA was the second highest out of all comparator areas nationally.

The renaissance of the River Mersey has seen an investment in offshore wind farms, the development of Liverpool2 deep water port and diversification within the Cammell Laird shipyard into civil nuclear and support for the wider renewables market. In addition investment into Unilever has secured its place as the global R & D centre for that industry. Manufacturing skills are a strong component of the workforce profile and the world-class universities across the City Region provide a valuable resource for recruiting the best graduates. These sectors therefore provide a firm basis upon which to develop a targeted approach to retaining graduates and attracting investment through the development of a distinctive offer.

#### **How are we going to get there:**

- We will build on our strong partnerships between the public and private sector across the City Region to ensure a collaborative approach to attracting inward investment based on our key growth sectors
- Through Devolution we will agree joint objectives with UKTI through the Combined Authority to deliver investment into the LCR
- We will develop a focussed inward investment delivery plan, aligned with an international

- strategy for Wirral Chamber of Commerce
- We will implement our Enterprise Zone Investment Fund in order to address viability and provide a catalyst for bringing forward development sites and appropriate business accommodation that will attract employers and investment
  - We will work proactively through partners such as the Wirral Chamber and Mersey Maritime to ensure the development of supply chains that can support and then benefit from inward investment and base this work on LCR Insight information
  - We will work through Devolution to identify with HMRC opportunities to extend its existing policy of custom warehousing in order to attract investment

**How we will measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will secure £250 million of private sector investment
- We will secure growth within our key supply chains
- We will work to improve economic productivity

**TOURISM – DEVELOP A VIBRANT TOURISM ECONOMY**

There are opportunities to build on Wirral's strong visitor offer to grow the sector still further and to make the Borough a place even more people enjoy visiting. This sector has clear potential to contribute to economic growth through investment and jobs and it makes the promotion of Wirral as a successful destination of vital economic importance.

**What do we already know:**

Wirral has the fastest growing tourism economy in the LCR which has grown 40% since 2009. It is valued at over £355m, employing 4,800 people and attracting 7.5 million visitors per year.

This growth in tourism has added an additional £103m to Wirral's local economy and provided a 20% increase in jobs within the sector.

**How are we going to get there:**

- We will work with partners to improve our tourism offer by ensuring we gather insight through a range of methods including a Visitor Research Study
- We will work closely with partners including the Wirral Chamber and the Wirral Visitor Economy Board and Network to ensure that we maximise the assets and opportunities of the Borough
- We will focus on key attractors such as the Coast, Countryside and Golf including The Open Championship and the development of the Hoylake Golf Resort
- We will explore new opportunities for growth including better linkage to high quality visitor attractions on the east of the Borough such as Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Park – building on the links to the River Mersey
- We will complete the 2015-17 Tourism Implementation Plan and deliver a reinvigorated tourism strategy

**How will we measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will increase visitor numbers in Wirral to 9.1 million by 2020
- We will increase Wirral's visitor spend to £450 million by 2020
- We will increase the value of the tourism economy by at least 5% each year.

**TRANSPORT**

The provision of efficient, well maintained and accessible transport networks is a critical factor in facilitating economic growth through providing access to housing and employment sites, as well as ensuring that residents are able to access

work opportunities both within and outside of the Borough. We need to have the necessary infrastructure in place that will meet the current and future needs of businesses and residents.

### **What do we already know:**

Wirral has good transport links both within the city region, nationally and internationally through proximity to Liverpool and Manchester airports, strong rail links to London (just over 2 hours from Liverpool and Chester), Manchester and Birmingham, as well as across the city region through the Merseyrail network, and enviable motorway connectivity.

The opening of Liverpool2, the new deep water container terminal in Sefton, will enable larger vessels to be brought closer to the UK's industrial and manufacturing centre than any other UK port and put Wirral at the heart of global trade.

Within Wirral and the city region the Merseyrail network is one of the most extensive in the UK and use of rail is considerably greater than in other comparable metropolitan areas. This network, alongside the city region bus services, provides sustainable travel to work links.

How are we going to get there:

- We will ensure that the city region LTP/ Transport Plan for Growth and Highways Asset Management Strategy are fully aligned to our economic growth opportunities so that investment in transport infrastructure enables the efficient movement of people and goods and maximises the contribution to a thriving economy
- Working with LCR Transport partners we are developing a long term 'pipeline' of schemes to provide the city region with a new programme of proposed transport investment to take us to 2020 and beyond

- We will ensure that Wirral's priorities for growth are reflected in these schemes including enhancements/electrification to the Bidston to Wrexham rail line, investment in the rail freight line to support the growth of Unilever, provision of light rail links within Wirral Waters and to Birkenhead and other key areas
- We will work through the Devolution deal for a devolved and consolidated local transport budget for the city region which will include all relevant devolved highways funding
- Support proposals to manage traffic flows into and out of the Borough and along the M53 at Ellesmere Port

### **How will we measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will have a city region pipeline of schemes in place that drive investment and reflect the Borough's growth priorities
- We will have a revitalised Highways Asset Management Strategy that guides investment in the Council's £1.9bn highway network .

## **HOUSING GROWTH**

The provision of good quality housing that meets the needs of Wirral's current residents and those of the future workforce is a key enabler of growth. It is therefore critical that we work with partners to be clear about how housing investment should be quantified, prioritised and targeted. This includes working with Registered Providers, private sector partners including landlords and developers and investment companies to understand the market and the demand drivers for growth.

Wirral's Housing Strategy is being reviewed in the context of the Wirral Plan which sets out new and ambitious housing growth targets. To achieve these it will be necessary to ensure that

stalled housing sites are unblocked as well as ensuring that investment in infrastructure supports and stimulates further growth. This will be carried out within the context of the Growth Plan so that any investment is clearly linked to driving economic growth.

**What do we already know:**

The Borough's existing housing land supply should enable up to 3,249 new homes to be built by 2020 and permission for up to 1,932 dwellings had already been granted by April 2015.

Although the Council's latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment shows a total capacity for a further 4,401 new dwellings within the urban area, the majority of these sites could not currently be delivered without further intervention including the review of local policies.

Outline consent for a further 13,521 units also exists at Wirral Waters but is likely to be tied to the delivery of future economic development.

**How are we going to get there:**

- We will deliver a housing offer that focuses on bringing forward sites for housing growth and will work to unlock blockages and kick start stalled housing sites in the Borough
- We will ensure that the evidence for housing growth is identified through the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment and reflected in the Core Strategy Local Plan supported by an LCR assessment of housing and employment land (SHELMA)
- We will consider how we will change our policy framework to ensure that we can bring forward appropriate housing and employment sites to meet our growth targets
- We will work with our private sector partners to ensure that our housing growth plan reflects market demand

- We will work with the Combined Authority to identify strategic housing sites for inclusion in the proposed Single City Region Framework

**How will we measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will build 3,500 new homes by 2020
- We will improve 2,250 private sector properties and bring 1,250 empty homes back into use by 2020

**ASSETS AND BUILDINGS ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE FOR WIRRAL BUSINESSES**

One of the key factors in supporting Wirral businesses to grow, and in attracting new investment to the Borough, is the provision of modern, fit for purpose commercial facilities. The Council and other public sector bodies have an extensive and diverse property portfolio including municipal offices, industrial units and ground leases that can be optimised to ensure that they meet the current and future needs of businesses.

However, we need a better understanding of the types of buildings and premises that will be required by businesses looking to grow within the Borough and we will work with our partners in the Chamber of Commerce in order to define this. This work will then underpin a review of existing council owned commercial property and that of partners, both public and private, in order to identify opportunities for joined up asset disposal or for investment to create suitable business and commercial space.

Where it is appropriate to do so, we will also look at raising capital receipts from the disposal or rationalisation of assets that are not required to be in Council ownership in order to contribute towards the delivery of the Wirral Plan outcomes. This will also include consideration of

the use of any additional capital resources generated by this approach to be used to facilitate potential new build schemes.

#### **What do we already know:**

Wirral Council has a total of 1,441 operational land and building assets and a non-operational estate of 458 land and building assets which generates an annual income of £1.4m. Whilst many of these assets are not applicable for commercial use, the Council will review those assets that can be seen as providing opportunities for private sector investment and also work with partners to join up asset reviews and disposals to create enhanced opportunities for business and commercial development.

This approach is in line with the One Wirral Public Estate programme which brings together all public sector bodies within a locality, to work together in delivering a new approach to managing land and property. Based on collaboration between partners, the programme has now been successful in being included as part of a wider Government initiative and will therefore be able to access learning and good practice from other parts of the country.

#### **How are we going to get there:**

- Working with partners including the Chamber of Commerce we will complete a business survey regarding asset requirements and this will support the development of an approach to remodelling available assets
- We will review council owned commercial assets currently leased/rented and evaluate options for retention, disposal and management
- We will use this review to inform our work with partners as part of the One Wirral Public Estate programme and to review joint opportunities for commercial development of existing sites with our partners

- We will identify the collective strength and added value of the assets that are owned or used by the public sector in Wirral in order to inform a single asset management profile and strategy

#### **How will we measure if we are getting it right:**

- We will have contributed to the provision of new and refurbished commercial space



**GOVERNANCE –  
DELIVERING THE  
COMMITMENTS OF  
THE GROWTH PLAN  
THROUGH THE  
WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP**

**THE ROLE OF WIRRAL COUNCIL**

In line with the Wirral Plan 2020, the Council will provide the strategic lead for Wirral’s sustainable growth. The Council will proactively co-ordinate dialogue and delivery with partners to achieve its aspirational outcomes.

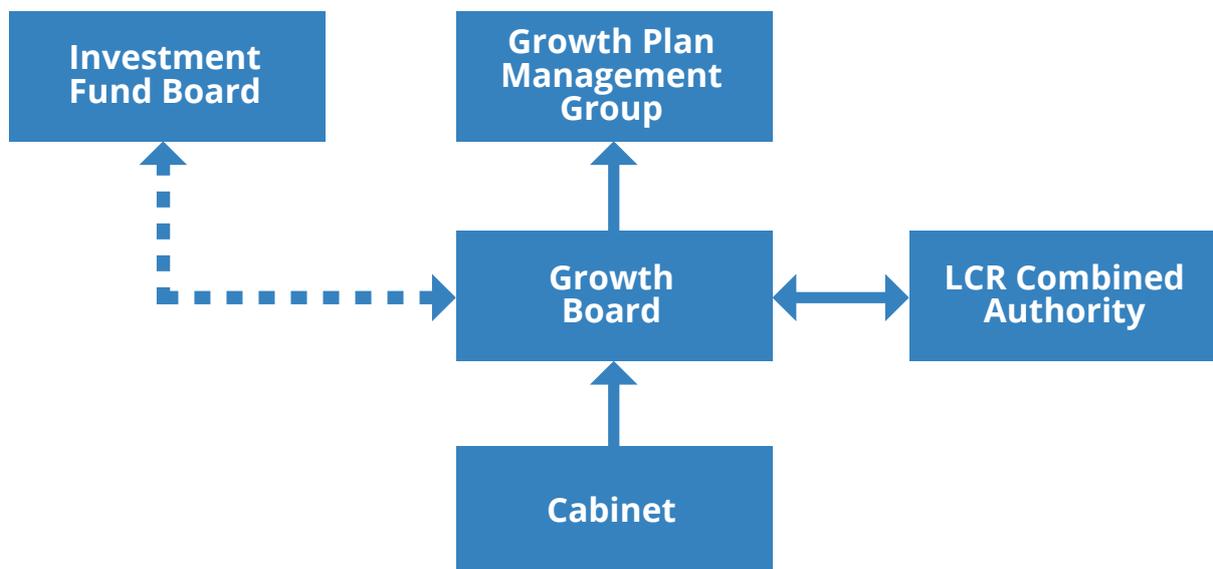
**To do the Council will:**

- Provide strong leadership
- Communicate with, listen to, understand, consult and involve partners, stakeholders and businesses
- Understand the needs of its residents and local markets to shape its places to make them work much better than we have before
- Use public sector assets much more responsively to meet the needs of businesses and our communities
- Ensure a positive planning environment
- Being ambitious to help deliver an even stronger future for the Liverpool City Region by influencing growth a decision making beyond our statutory boundaries

**THE ROLE OF WIRRAL’S PARTNERSHIP - GROWTH BOARD**

Wirral’s ambitious Growth agenda is built on the foundations of strong partnership working and integrated delivery arrangements with our partners.

The Growth Board includes representatives from across the private sector and will provide an overseeing role, ensuring that the stated Growth outcomes of the Wirral Plan are delivered on time and in a coordinated manner.



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To find out more:



**search: Wirral 2020**



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**THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP**