

POLICY INFORM:

Business



Policy Inform- March 2017

The Policy Inform briefings will provide an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament and emerging policies.

The Policy Inform briefings have been produced specifically to inform Portfolio Holders and Elected Members and will be taken to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees for discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

The Wirral Plan:

A 2020 Vision which sets out a shared partnership approach to improve outcomes for Wirral residents.

The Plan focuses on three key theme areas:

- **People**
- **Business**
- **Environment**

This Policy Inform paper will focus on the business theme:

- **Greater Job Opportunities in Wirral**
- **Increase Inward Investment**
- **Thriving Small Businesses**
- **Workforce Skills Match Business Needs**
- **Vibrant Tourism Economy**
- **Technology and Infrastructure Fit for the Future**
- **Assets and Buildings are Fit for Purpose**



The Wirral Plan Business Theme states:

“Wirral is a place where employers want to invest and businesses thrive.”

Business Policy Briefing:

This Policy Inform briefing focuses specifically on policies and legislation relating to the Business Theme and is intended to provide Members of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the latest position on emerging policy and legislative developments to support the committees work programme and future scrutiny work.

The following table outlines the timetable for the preparation and reporting of policy briefing papers:

Overview & Scrutiny Briefings	
July 2016	The first policy briefing focused predominately on the Queen’s Speech, which established the Government’s legislative programme for the parliamentary year ahead.
September 2016	The second policy briefing was produced in September; it provided an update on policy and legislation and focused on Wirral Implications relevant to the government’s programme of legislation as outlined in the previous policy briefing.

<p>January 2017</p>	<p>The third policy briefing focused on the Autumn Statement which set out how Government's money was allocated. The policy briefing also provided an update on policy and legislation and considered relevant implications for Wirral.</p>
<p>March 2017</p>	<p>The fourth policy briefing will provide an update on policy and legislation and will consider relevant implications for Wirral.</p>

The March policy briefing provides an update on policy and legislative developments that have been aligned to the Wirral Plan pledges.

The Committee may wish to identify specific policy areas to focus upon which are in line with the Committee's work programme. Detailed briefing papers can be prepared for these subject matters at the request of the Committee which would be in addition to the regular policy briefing papers outlined above.

QUEEN'S SPEECH 2016 – DESIGNATION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

On Wednesday 18th May 2016, the Queens Speech was delivered outlining the Government's programme of legislation and policies for the coming year.

Below is a list of all of the Bills that will have implications for local government. These Bills were announced during the Queens speech. The list also includes Bills carried over from the 2015-16 session. The list identifies the Overview and Scrutiny Committee remit that the legislation most closely aligns:

Legislative Plans	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Prison and Courts Reform Bill	Environment
Investigatory Powers Bill	Environment
Policing and Crime Bill	People and Environment
Soft Drinks Industry Levy	People and Environment
Lifetime Savings Bill	People and Environment
Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill	Business and Environment
Children and Social Work Bill	People
Education for All Bill	People
Higher Education and Research Bill	People
National Citizen Service Bill	People
Finance Bill	People and Business
Bus Services Bill	Business
Local Government Finance Bill	Business
Digital Economy Bill	Business
Modern Transport Bill	Business
High Speed Rail Bill	Business
Better Markets Bill	Business

Additional Bills that were announced during the Queen’s speech are outlined below. These will be monitored to identify any emerging implications for Local Government and reported to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

Additional Legislative Plans
Wales Bill
Bill of Rights
Criminal Finances Bill
Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill
Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill
Small Charitable Donations Bill
NHS (Overseas Visitors Charging) Bill

The Bills relevant to the Business priority are discussed in further detail in this paper.

WIRRAL PLAN BUSINESS PLEDGES- POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

GREATER JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN WIRRAL

We will provide an increase in the number and range of jobs in Wirral so all our residents can find employment opportunities.

Our Pledge Ambition:

To make progress towards this goal we will see the creation and safeguarding of 5000 jobs by 2020. We will also seek to increase the number of employers who pay the living wage and will work with partners and others to reduce unemployment and improve access to skills. We will encourage more young people into work who are currently not in employment, education or training.

Outcome Strategy:

1. Ensure that residents furthest away from work have the right support to access employment
2. Build growth in target sectors such as energy and advanced manufacturing
3. Work with the Combined Authority (CA) to co-design and then co-commission with DWP the future employment support for harder to reach claimants
4. Work with the CA to identify strategic employment sites for inclusion in the proposed single city region framework



Associated Legislation:

Unpaid Work Experience (Prohibition) Bill

Reportin stage: Received its first reading in the House of Lords on the 7th June 2016. A date for its second reading is yet to be announced

The purpose of the Bill is to: To make provision for the prohibition of unpaid work experience exceeding four weeks and for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so far: There is concern in both *Houses* that banning unpaid internships could reduce the opportunities for young people to gain valuable work experience.

Associated Legislation Continued:

Unpaid Work Experience (Prohibition) Bill Continued

Concerns and progress so far: Additionally, it is unclear what effect this bill would have on volunteering and other employment law if it were to achieve royal assent.

Associated Legislation:

Workers' Rights (Maintenance of EU Standards) Bill

Reporting stage: The first reading in the House of Commons occurred on the 7th September 2016. The second reading is scheduled for 24th March 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to: Make provision about the safeguarding of workers' rights derived from European Union legislation after the withdrawal of the UK from the EU; and for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so far: The EU currently ensures UK workers have the right to annual leave, daily rest breaks, the right to equal treatment for agency workers after 12 weeks service, and protection against unfair dismissal upon a transfer of undertakings, according to research by the House of Commons Library. However, the current Business Minister Margot James declined to give a clear answer as to whether she would safeguard these rights, stating only that, 'Employment protections are a priority for this government'.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Delivering value through the apprenticeships programme

LGiU, 28/11/2016

Summary- A report from the National Audit Office, aiming to inform and evaluate the Government's programme of apprenticeship reform, followed a recent announcement of an apprentice levy being introduced in spring 2017. The levy requires all employers operating in the UK, with a pay bill over £3 million each year, to invest in apprenticeships. It warns of "a clear risk that the drive to deliver greater numbers is delivered at the expense of delivering maximum value".

Brief Analysis- As part of its work to tackle this 'productivity gap', the government is radically overhauling the apprenticeship system in England, expanding its role as a route into skilled, long-term employment. Increased funding led to over two million people beginning apprenticeships between 2010 and 2015. The government has committed to delivering a further three million starts before 2020.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Delivering value through the apprenticeships programme

[LGIU, 28/11/2016](#)

Brief Analysis Continued-

The NAO's Auditor General, Amyas Morse, concludes: "The DfE needs to chart and follow a course from having a lot of apprenticeships to having the right apprenticeships in order to help improve the UK's productivity, and achieve value for money, in return for the costs of the programme."

The report also notes that the Office for National Statistics has estimated that the UK is about a third less productive than Germany, France and the USA. This gap is the widest it has been since records began in 1991. Thus, in the context of Brexit and the forthcoming rounds of trade renegotiations, the success or otherwise of the government's apprenticeship reforms has come to be more significant.

Associated Emerging Policy:

One Public Estate Expansion

[GOV.uk, 27/01/2017](#)

Summary – The Cabinet Office and Local Government Association have announced that a further 79 councils will join the One Public Estate (OPE) programme, bringing the total number of councils participating OPE to 255 – almost three quarters of all councils in England. Consequently, a further £3.6 million has been allocated to councils across new and existing partnerships on the programme.

The latest funding round means that by 2019 to 20 the partnerships on OPE expect to:

- create 44,000 jobs
- release land for 25,000 homes
- raise £415 million in capital receipts from land and property sales
- cut running costs by £98 million

Brief Analysis – The funding will support public sector partnerships to work collaboratively on land and property initiatives, generating new jobs and homes, creating more joined up public services to local communities, and delivering savings for the taxpayer.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Institute for Apprenticeships: Draft Strategic Guidance and Draft Operational Plan

LGiU, 16/02/2017

Summary - The Institute for Apprenticeships was announced in November 2015 as an employer-led regulator responsible for overseeing the quality of apprenticeships in England. The Institute will launch as an independent body in April 2017, and its remit will expand to encompass technical education in 2018 following approval of the Technical and Further education Bill.

The Department for Education's draft strategic guidance proposes that the government will publish strategic guidance annually, and that the Institute for Apprenticeships must outline how it has responded to this guidance in its annual report.

The DfE's draft strategic guidance confirms the Institute for Apprenticeships' main functions:

- To set quality criteria for the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans;
- To review, then approve or reject them;
- To maintain a public database of apprenticeship standards and publish information illustrating potential gaps;
- To advise on the maximum level of government funding available for standards;
- To ensure arrangements are in place to quality assure all end-point assessments;
- From April 2018, to help oversee the reform of technical education.

The Institute's activities, while primarily intended to ensure the quality of apprenticeships, will also need to support the government's aim of achieving three million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

Brief Analysis - The remit of the Institute for Apprenticeships has seen a rapid expansion over the past year, as the government has increasingly relied on it to overcome criticisms of its programme of apprenticeship reform. These criticisms – voiced most forcefully by Ofsted and the National Audit Office (NAO) – highlight that:

- The quality of apprenticeship provision is too variable;
- Not enough of the new apprenticeships are providing the advanced skills needed in sectors with shortages;
- Most growth has occurred in the service sector and in apprenticeships for the over-25s;
- The number of 16-18-year-olds on apprenticeships remains as low today as a decade ago;
- Generally, the government has failed to consider how, as well as generating lots of apprenticeship starts, it will get the mix of these new apprenticeships right

The government has responded to criticism by announcing the subsequent expansion of the Institute for Apprenticeships. From April 2018, the institute will oversee the reform of technical education.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Local authorities to hire ‘thousands’ of new apprentices

[LocalGov, 20/01/2017](#)

Summary- The local government sector will be required to hire ‘thousands’ of apprentices as part of Whitehall’s commitment to deliver three million apprenticeships by 2020.

Brief Analysis- Skills Minister Robert Halfon announced the Department for Education (DfE) is setting the public sector a target of recruiting 200,000 more apprentices by 2020. As part of the 2016 Enterprise Act and Apprenticeship Levy, the Government made it a requirement that at least 2.3% of the workforce in public bodies with 250 or more employees should be made up of apprentices. This will come into force in April.

Associated Emerging Policy:

The Future of Jobcentre Plus: Work and Pensions Committee Report

[LGiU, 15/02/2017](#)

Summary – A Work and Pensions Committee (WPC) report has recently been published regarding the future of Jobcentre Plus (JCP). The report deals with potential barriers to JCP’s success in meeting its new challenges, and how the DWP can better understand what works in supporting claimants into work. The context for the report is a change in the operating conditions of JCP and a shift in its priorities; henceforth, JCP will support higher proportions of individuals with health conditions and disabilities, and people who are long-term unemployed.

The Work Programme and Work Choice are to be replaced with a new Work and Health Programme, contracts for which begin from October 2017.

Furthermore, the Government plans to co-locate JCP offices with other local services, such as council benefit teams and health services, and a process of devolution of employment services to combined local authorities and devolved governments.

Brief Analysis – During the inquiry doubts were expressed by many witnesses that JCP has the capacity to respond to the challenges facing it, particularly in the light of reductions in departmental budgets; in 2015/16, there were 10,600 front-line, full time equivalent Work Coaches, down from 17,750 in 2011-12.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

The Apprenticeship Levy

The Apprenticeship Levy will come into effect from 6th April 2017. The Levy is applicable to all employers, including public sector organisations. The Levy links to the Greater Job Opportunities for All Pledge & Workforce Skills Match Business Needs Pledge. There are a number of concerns associated with the Levy:

- The Apprenticeship Levy can only be spent on the training and assessment of new apprentices, or to upskill the existing workforce. The Council will therefore have to consider the financial impact of paying for the salaries and associated on costs for new apprentices.
- The Council will have responsibility for paying the levy in the schools where the Local Authority are the 'ultimate' employer of staff in Community Schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools, and pay National Insurance Contributions (NICs). The Council will therefore need to consider how schools will be able to maximise the apprenticeship levy funds.

WORKFORCE SKILLS MATCH BUSINESS NEEDS

To meet the needs of local businesses and attract those interested in investing in Wirral we must develop an appropriately skilled workforce that meets the needs of businesses for the future

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will work with our partners in education and training to closely align the provision of training offered with the skills businesses will need to develop the borough. We will measure and close this skills gap by 2020.

Outcome Strategy:

Wirral's Growth Strategy- 1. Greater job opportunities in Wirral
2. Workforce skills match business needs
3. Increase inward investment
4. Vibrant tourism economy



Associated Legislation:

Technical and Further Education Bill

Reporting Stage: General debate on all aspects of the Bill took place in the House of Lords at the second reading Wednesday 1st Feb. The Bill is set to continue at the committee stage on 1st March 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to: Take forward the government's ambition to streamline technical education to ensure clear routes into skill employment. These reforms will put employers at the heart of the skills system, enabling them to drive the skills they need and value the most. The Bill also commits to create 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020 which will be achieved through the introduction of an apprenticeship target and levy.

Concerns and progress so far: The Bill has been amended to further support the achievements of those young people from difficult backgrounds, such as those with special educational needs or disability (SEND). For example, those with SEND are expected to be over-represented on technical education routes: 23% of those who access technical education routes will have some form of special educational need compared with 7% of those taking level 3 academic qualifications, and 20% of those in the cohort as a whole.

However, concerns have been raised in ensuring businesses are engaged in apprenticeships and make the route to skills more relevant for businesses so that this will not only help to address the productivity challenges, but also improve the life chances of those involved.

Associated Legislation continued:

Technical and Further Education Bill

There have also been concerns raised regarding the Bills implementation, process and progress. For example, a discussion was had regarding whether a strategy for careers advice is needed within the Bill.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Briefing: Top five challenges for the local government workforce
LGiU, 12/01/2017

Summary- Analyses the findings of the University of Birmingham's 21st Century Councillor and Public Servant research. The research is based around the need for a new sort of local government workforce; one which can meet the increasing and changing demands of the sector. The briefing also notes how during the recruitment process we need to strike the balance between generic and technical skills.

Brief Analysis- Within this context and based on research they cited that the top five workforce challenges for local authorities were:

1. Ensuring the required skills and capacity are in place to address issues relating to place leadership. These include devolution, combined authorities, health/social care integration, STPs, transport and economic growth
2. Ensuring that change is well planned, and positively but realistically positioned so that the workforce does not suffer from 'change fatigue' or burnout
3. The need to move to more flexible organizational structures and more flexible approaches to employment
4. Continuing to attract and retain a high-quality and diverse workforce
5. Fully understand and developing mitigations to address the possible impacts of Brexit on the local authority workforce.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Technical and Further Education Bill

As aforementioned on page 12 there are a number of implications associated with the Apprenticeship Levy for the Council to consider. There are also a number of implications for the Council to consider in relation to the Apprenticeship Public Sector Target to enable the Government to achieve their pledge of creating 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Technical and Further Education Bill

As the Public Sector target is based on 2.3% of the Council's headcount of 7,766 (including community schools) this would equate to a total of 178 apprentices. At present the Council has 25 apprentices.

The Council (including community schools) will therefore need to increase the current number of available apprentices in order to meet the Government's target by April 2017.

The increase in the number of available apprenticeships across Wirral will contribute towards the delivery of the following pledges:

- Workforce Skills Match Business Needs
- Greater Job Opportunities
- Vulnerable Children Reach Their Full Potential

INCREASED INWARD INVESTMENT

To continue to grow our economy we have to identify local, national and international opportunities to bring more investment into Wirral.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will increase the borough's gross value added at a faster rate than the regional average and commit to securing £250 million of Private sector investment.

Outcome Strategy:

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 UK's strongest small business sectors and our unique geographical position at the Western gateway to UK and Europe.



Associated Legislation:

The Local Government Finance Bill (Formerly the Local Growth and Jobs Bill)

Reporting stage: The Bill received its second reading in the House of Commons on 23rd January 2017; the date for the Committee stage is yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Grow the economy by giving local councils an incentive to support business and develop their local economy.
- To allow local authorities to retain 100% of their business rates.
- To give local councils the power to cut business rates for local firms.
- To give combined authority mayors the power to add a supplement on business rates bills to fund new infrastructure projects.
- To confer power on certain local authorities in England to impose a levy on persons with certain property interests in a business improvement district to finance projects to be carried out in the district; and for connected purposes.
- Modernise business rates billing.

Associated Legislation:

The Local Government Finance Bill Continued

Concerns and progress so far:

A potential problem is widening regional inequality, where areas that are less well-off and have fewer thriving businesses end up receiving lower business rates than their wealthier counterparts. The Bill restricts the government's ability to redistribute resources to poorer local authorities. However, the Bill was amended during its second reading to change the inflation indicator for business rates from RPI to CPI to lower annual rate increases for businesses, providing a reduction in the burden of business rates that businesses are going to experience.

Associated Legislation:

Economic Strategy Bill

Reporting stage: The First reading occurred on 14th June 2016 in the House of Lords. The date for the second reading is yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to: make provision for the support of the United Kingdom's business sector; and the development of an industrial and retail strategy.

Concerns and progress so far:

If Royal Assent is achieved, the Bill would require the Secretary of State to consult with the Business sector to identify changes affecting businesses and the economy that pose a risk to the future prosperity of businesses and employees in the UK.

Within six months of the day on which this Act is passed, and once in each subsequent 12 month period, the Secretary of State must publish, and lay before both Houses of Parliament, a report on a strategy to support the industry and retail sectors in the UK.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Local Government Finance Bill

The LGA have welcomed the Local Government Finance Bill, stating that they have been campaigning for councils to keep 100 percent of its business rates income for years. They say the Bill offers local communities and businesses huge potential in the face of disappearing government grants. The Bill has also been welcomed thanks to its provision for the reform of the business rates appeal process.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Local Government Finance Bill

Over the last 3 years councils have had to divert £1.75 billion away from stretched local services in order to cover the risk of such appeals from almost 900,000 businesses, something which the LGA says is further hindering councils from protecting key services. The bill also offers tax breaks for up to five years for digital communication companies laying new infrastructure for fibre optic broadband, providing an incentive for those companies to move further and faster in providing fast broadband to the whole of the UK.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Economic Strategy Bill

The Economic Strategy Bill [HL] has yet to publish its specificities, but following its second reading (date to be announced) Wirral-specific implications will be record. These implications will be outlined in the next Policy Inform report when further information is available.

THRIVING SMALL BUSINESSES

Our economy is also supported by entrepreneurs and small businesses

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will work with our partners and other community groups to deliver net additional 250 new businesses in Wirral over the coming five years. We will make it easier for our small businesses to grow and will work to improve local high streets and our town centre economy.

Outcome Strategy – Growth Plan:

1. Create a more dynamic and growth focused business population; 2. Raise the level of business starts; 3. Increase growth aspiration, skills and competence among business leaders; 4. Improve productivity and competitiveness; 5. Encourage diversification into emerging markets; 6. Increase the scale of export activity and the number of businesses that export their goods and services; 7. Promote supply chain development activity in key sectors.



Associated Legislation:

Better Markets Bill

Reporting stage: This Bill has yet to have its First Reading in either House and no announcement has been made as to when this might occur.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Open up markets, boost competition, give consumers more power and choice and make economic regulators work better.

Concerns and progress so far:

The CMA's (Competition and Markets Authority) recommendations for making the energy market more competitive have been criticised. They have abandoned plans for a wide-ranging cap on energy bills and their suggestion for giving energy providers access to more consumer data has led to concerns that people will be bombarded with junk mail as providers compete to give consumers more options.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Better Markets Bill

The Better Markets Bill was announced during the Queen's speech in May 2016 and aims to boost competition and reduce unnecessary burdens on business. It is thought that the Better Markets Bill will have a specific implication on the energy sector, and specially the process of switching suppliers. If passed, the Bill will give consumers more power and choice when choosing energy supplier, and it is hoped that in the long term next-day switching will be brought into force by 2019. This would mean that business is less at the mercy of the suppliers' timelines, reducing their risk of sitting on expensive out of contract rates while waiting for a switch to go through. As the Better Markets Bill is yet to be brought to parliament (the government hope to do so at some point during 2017), details about the Bill and therefore its possible implications on local government are currently mere speculation. But, if the Bill reduces barriers to business growth, it may very well help local authorities raise income through increased business tax revenue which would provide councils with additional income and create jobs for residents in the process as new businesses are set up and existing ones grow.

Associated Emerging Policy:

'Building our Industrial Strategy' – A Green Paper

[LGiU, 22/02/2017](#)

Summary – In late January 2017, Government published its Green Paper 'Building our Industrial Strategy'. This seeks consultation responses from stakeholders (including local government) on 38 specific questions by April 17th (see consultation link below). The strategy seeks to both build on excellence and address underperformance through a productivity improvement strategy with ten pillars. These pillars comprise two direct drivers of productivity improvement – science, R&D, and world-leading sectors; five enablers of growth – skills, infrastructure, business support, energy, and procurement; two geographical domains – international trade and investment, and spreading growth across the country. The final pillar looks at the institutional leadership of growth – both sector and place-based, and bringing these together.

Brief Analysis – Although this Green Paper has been positively received, some concern has been raised regarding the length of time it has taken for this Green Paper to be released, especially when the paper constitutes a collection of previous announcements and ideas for the future. In addition, the paper has been criticised for failing to identify a clear vision of where Government aspires to take the UK and over what period of time. This suggests that, in some areas at least, the Government is unsure of its industrial vision. However, this could potentially provide a real opportunity for LA's to shape the Government's Industrial Strategy via the consultation.

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

**100% Business Rates Retention:
Further Consultation on the Design of the Reformed System**

In October 2015, the government committed that, by the end of the Parliament, local government should retain all taxes raised locally, including 100% of locally collected business rates. This amounts to a significant reform of the local government finance system.

This consultation is part of a process of ongoing engagement and collaboration with interested parties on the design of reforms. It seeks views on some of the detailed aspects of the design of the reformed system.

This consultation closes at 11:45pm on 3rd May 2017. More information can be accessed [here](#).

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

Unlocking the Potential of Primary Authority

Primary Authority enables businesses to obtain consistent advice on compliance with regulation, in a tailored and cost-effective manner, from local authorities. The scheme began in April 2009 and has since been extended to include more areas of regulation and allow more businesses to participate.

Following a review of Primary Authority and public consultation, the Enterprise Act 2016 further extends and simplifies the scheme, with effect from 1 October 2017.

This consultation includes a draft statutory instrument containing the details needed to effect the changes. It also outlines proposals to replace the 'categories' system which determines the scope of partnerships and underpins the current administration of Primary Authority.

The consultation period for both areas will close 11:45pm on 7th April 2017. More information can be accessed [here](#).

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

Building our Industrial Strategy

The Government wants to build an industrial strategy that addresses long-term challenges to the UK economy. They have said their aim is to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. This green paper sets out their approach and some early actions they have committed to take.

The consultation period for both areas will close 11:45pm on 17th April 2017. More information can be accessed [here](#).

VIBRANT TOURISM ECONOMY

We are proud of our home and we will work to promote and grow the borough's tourism offer, making Wirral a place even more people enjoy visiting.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will review and make best use of our heritage, leisure and cultural assets to drive tourism, the associated creation of jobs and increase revenue for Wirral's visitor economy to £450 million by 2020.

Outcome Strategy:

The Tourism Strategy is currently in development.



Associated Legislation:

There is currently no emerging legislation associated with this pledge. We will monitor any developments that may have a future impact.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Possible Tourism 'Bed Tax'

Summary: Several local councils across the UK are calling for central government to devolve more local spending powers so that they could implement a tourism 'bed tax' in order to plug the funding gap that the vast majority of local councils currently face.

Brief Analysis: The move would follow similar levies imposed across European cities such as Paris, Rome and Barcelona, where tourists can expect to pay a tax of up to 3 euro per person per night to stay in some of the best hotels. It is thought that the amount charged in the UK, if it became within councils' remit to do so, would be between £1 and £2.50 per person per night. Camden Council in central London has shown a keen interest in imposing the levy, as well as Westminster, Edinburgh, Bristol, Brighton and Bath Councils, and has received backing from London mayor Sadiq Khan. However, the hospitality Association has warned that the move could discourage visitors from coming to the UK, or spending less money if they do visit in order to compensate for the extra cost. Furthermore, the possibility of a tourism tax in UK cities becomes even more controversial when you consider that the UK has one of the highest VAT rates in Europe. Local council's say though, that a tourism tax would help them pay for statutory but stretched services such as adult social care.

Associated Emerging Policy:

£120 million Available to Support Growth in Rural Areas

[Gov.uk](#) 25/01/17

Summary: The Rural Payments Agency announced on the 25th January 2017 a new fund to help rural communities create jobs and boost growth. The fund comes from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which supports projects that invest in building businesses, creating new jobs and growing the economy in rural areas including a focus on improving tourism infrastructure.

Brief Analysis: The £120 million fund is of particular interest to business within the tourism sector, as RPA Rural Development Director Alison Webster illustrates: “This is excellent news for small and micro-businesses, particularly the food and drink and tourism sectors, which play a major role in the economy of rural areas”. More information about the fund and how to apply for a grant can be accessed [here](#).

Ensure that Wirral has safe, affordable, well maintained and efficient transport networks for residents to access community services, enjoy our leisure facilities and commute to work.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We will use engineering to improve our road networks, to build new cycle routes, improve pedestrian facilities and take advantage of new technology to travel efficiently, safely and sustainably. People will feel confident to change their travel habits and try healthy, environmentally friendly ways of getting around. Residents, business and visitors will know how to get around and where to find information.

In a digital economy we will also complete the deployment of a high speed broadband network for more residents and businesses in Wirral with 98% having access by 2017

Outcome Strategy: Transport

1. Keep traffic moving safely and efficiently
2. Reliable and affordable public transport
3. Encourage healthy active travel
4. Inclusive integrated transport that supports our residents needs

Outcome Strategy: Digital

1. Every resident with the ability and the skills to get the most out of technology to improve their lives
2. Every business benefitting from market-leading technology infrastructure, helping them to open up new markets and compete globally.
3. Every public service is joined up, integrated and available online in a way which makes it simple and accessible to get support online.



Associated Legislation:

Bus Services Bill

Reporting stage: The first reading of this bill occurred on 24th November 2016. The date for the second reading in the House of Commons has yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Strengthen arrangements for partnership working in the sector
- Introduce 'enhanced partnerships'. Introduce new franchising powers with decision making at a local level
- Provide for a step change in the information available to bus passengers

Concerns and progress so far:

Clause 21 of the Bus Services Bill initially read as follows:

21 Bus companies: limitation of powers of authorities in England

- (1) A relevant authority may not, in exercise of any of its powers, form a company for the purpose of providing a local service.

However, members of the House of Lords voted to remove clause 21 from the Bill after receiving public criticism. The Clause essentially prevented Local Authorities from setting up and running their own bus companies, and with many currently publicly owned bus companies providing large amounts of revenue for local authority budgets the decision will be welcome news to many councils.

Associated Legislation:

Digital Economy Bill

Reporting stage: The Digital Economy Bill passed the Committee stage on the 8th February 2017. However, the date for the report stage is yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- A Bill to make provision about electronic communications infrastructure and services
- To provide for restricting access to online pornography
- To make provision about protection of intellectual property in connection with electronic communications
- To make provision about data-sharing
- To make provision about functions of OFCOM in relation to the BBC
- To provide for determination by the BBC of age-related TV licence fee concessions
- To make provision about the regulation of direct marketing
- To make other provision about OFCOM and its functions; and for connected purposes.

Associated Legislation Continued:

Digital Economy Bill

Concerns and progress so far:

The following amendments were agreed by the House of Commons Public Bill Committee:

- The Bill will now include a specific obligation for providers to fix faults with connections within appropriate timescales.
- The Bill will now allow an end-user to terminate a contract on repeatedly failing to meet a specific standard or obligation; this is currently optional.
- Courses of study for qualifications in IT are free of charge for persons in England aged 19 or over.
- A new clause has been inserted to compel the government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the Universal Service Obligation (USO).
- Suppliers will be obligated to provide consistent upload speeds at a minimum of 2Mbps with the aim of doubling that figure over the next 10 years.

However, Labour's Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy, Louise Haigh, doesn't believe the Bill goes far enough in terms of the USO for broadband (the legal right to every household in the country for 10Mbps by 2020). She believes that by the time the scheme is rolled out the 10Mbps broadband speed will be outdated and leave the UK falling behind in terms of digital infrastructure.

Associated Legislation:

Modern Transport Bill

Chris Grayling, the new transport secretary, has announced that the Modern Transport Bill will be published in early 2017 to help Britain become a world-leader in autonomous driving technology.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Cut red tape and put the right framework in place to allow innovation to flourish.
- Create the conditions that drive innovation and put the UK at the forefront of modern global transport developments as part of the country's long term economic plan.
- Maintain and extend the UK's role as a world-leading transport manufacturing base.
- Ensure new technology delivers better, safer journeys, while keeping Britain at the cutting edge of international transport technology.

Associated Legislation:

Railways Bill

Reporting stage: This Bill is expected to have its second reading debate in the House of Commons on Friday 24th March 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- A Bill to require the Secretary of State to assume control of passenger rail franchises when they come up for renewal; and for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so far:

Ian Taylor, co-founder of the Transport for Quality of Life think tank, has observed that private sector inefficiencies have led to wastage worth £1 billion a year, enough to cut ticket prices by 20% if railways were nationalised.

However, this Bill is highly unlikely to achieve Royal Assent.

Associated Legislation:

High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017

Reporting stage: This Bill achieved Royal Assent on 23rd February 2017. The Bill is now an Act of Parliament (law).

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Provide the Government with the legal powers to construct and operate Phase One of High Speed 2 (HS2). On becoming an Act, it would give the Government deemed planning permission for the railway between London and the West Midlands.
- This will help deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment to build High Speed 2

Concerns and progress so far:

A new rail franchise combining the current InterCity West Coast main line with HS2 high-speed services has been announced by the government. The new franchise will be called West Coast Partnership and is scheduled to start on 1st April 2019. The operator will be responsible for services on both the West Coast Main Line from 2019 and running of the initial HS2 services in 2026. The contract will run for the first three to five years of HS2's operation.

It is hoped that HS2 will reduce overcrowding on the existing network and generate economic growth across the country. However, critics say the project is too expensive (estimated £55.7bn) and will damage the environment. Furthermore, Mike Cash, general secretary of the RMT, criticised a decision to award the franchise to a private operator after spending such a large amount of taxpayer's money on the project.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Bus Services Bill

The Bus Services Bill was discussed at Merseytravel's Committee on the 3rd November in which they noted 'the importance of the Bill to the Liverpool City Region Devolution Deal and welcomes the new devolved powers to significantly improve bus services for passengers, particularly the new powers of a simple route to introduce Bus Franchising.' The Bill will help strengthen the work already being undertaken to establish a Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance and will help to deliver Priority Two of Wirral's Transport Strategy.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Digital Economy Bill

The implications outlined in the previous Policy Inform papers produced in September still remain.

- In addition there are safeguarding implications as the Bill proposes strict new regulations in relation to online pornography. It will force pornographic websites to add age verification checks that won't let people watch videos until they sign up to a special verification programme. New rules will also ban videos from showing a range of 'unusual acts' from being shown on pornographic websites. The LGA has welcomed these measures as a positive step to protect children online.
- A group of experts has raised concerns to the government that the Digital Economy Bill fails to provide enough detail and scrutiny around its data-sharing commitments. They are concerned about data security and the possibility of government agencies and local government sharing data without subjects' knowledge.
- The LGA has asked for a new clause in the Bill to include a reporting function which would compel the Government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the Universal Service Obligation. This is a safeguard that would compel broadband providers to provide fast and reliable speeds, particularly in rural areas.
- The Government's has committed to upskill people with basic digital skills. The LGA has asked that any new training requirements be matched by additional funding from central Government. It has asked that the courses also be locally routed and commissioned. This responsibility may fall to local authorities.
- The LGA has asked that, in order to prevent further digital exclusion, the Government put in place a social tariff, in a similar manner to the telephony USO, for those who would face undue hardship having to pay for broadband services.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Modern Transport Bill

Wirral and the Liverpool City Region have a number of electric vehicle charging points. This Bill will help consumers by identifying the location of charge points and reducing the barriers to utilising different networks through transparent tariffs and Smart charging technology, impacts of the Bill and how it impacts the local network will have to be considered. The Bill will also promote the provision of hydrogen recharging infrastructure, which the Liverpool City Region might investigate the potential of, due to the proximity of hydrogen production in Halton.

Potential implications for the Wirral Plan as a result of emerging legislation and policy:

Railways Bill

Locally the Bill would not have a significant impact on the Merseyrail network with Merseytravel letting the concession for the network, setting the conditions and terms of contract. Merseytravel's level of control over the local franchise helps to deliver Priority 2 of the Transport Strategy. The Bill could have a larger impact on cross boundary and inter regional travel, for example the Wrexham to Bidston Line which falls under the Wales and Borders passenger services franchise.

High Speed Rail Bill

HS2 will help to reduce journey times to London via Liverpool by approximately 20% on completion of phase 1 with classic compatible trains entering the high speed network near Lichfield. This will enable Wirral to become more competitive by reducing the barrier of accessibility to the region. The completion of Phase 2 of HS2 should also enable extra capacity for passengers and freight on the West Coast Main Line, which will benefit the City Region and in particular the port of Liverpool. The aspirations of the Liverpool City Region are to make a direct link to the HS2 network near to Manchester; this would require a brand new twin track line between Liverpool and Manchester with a new rail terminus in the Lime Street area to accommodate HS2 trains.

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

HS2: Phase 2

The second phase of High Speed Rail, which the Government wants to be fully operational by 2033, will cover an area from the West Midlands to Leeds and Manchester. It is expected that a further Bill detailing the plans for this part of the wider-scale project will be deposited into parliament in 2017. Further to the announcement of the preferred route for phase 2 on the 15th November 2016, which will see HS2 trains serve Liverpool Lime Street, the government has now opened a consultation period asking for responses to questions about route refinement and property compensation and assistance schemes.

The consultation period for both areas will close 9th March 2017. More information can be accessed [here](#)

Opportunity to shape national legislation and policy:

Bus Services Bill: Consultation on Draft Regulations and Guidance

The draft regulations include:

- Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes
- Franchising including: service permits; transitional provisions
- Enhanced partnerships and the operator objection mechanism
- Information on varied or cancelled services

The guidance includes:

- Information authorities should follow when conducting an assessment of their franchising scheme
- How authorities should approach enhanced partnerships
- Competition considerations

The consultation period for both areas will close 11:45pm on 21st March 2017. More information can be accessed [here](#).

ASSETS AND BUILDINGS ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE FOR WIRRAL'S BUSINESSES

Wirral businesses are looking for new and refurbished commercial space to grow and expand into. We must ensure the best use of our real estate assets by linking them to business and community aspirations.

Our Pledge Ambition:

We need to make Wirral a business-friendly borough and one way to achieve that is to make our planning processes simpler to encourage growth over the next five years.

Outcome Strategy:

Asset's Strategy- Priorities:

1. Delivering more integrated and customer focused services
2. Creating economic growth
3. Generating capital receipts and revenue streams
4. Reducing running costs



Associated Legislation:

Town and Country Planning (Electricity Generating Consent) Bill 2016-17

Reporting Stage: This Private Members' Bill had its first reading on 25 January 2017 through the Ten Minute Rule. The Bill's second reading is scheduled for the 24th March 2017.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Make provision about the disclosure, consideration and approval of proposals for onshore electricity power stations of 50MW or less;
- Require the application of Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI) terms and conditions in certain circumstances;
- Require sector-specific collective national workforce agreements in other circumstances;
- And for connected purposes.

Concerns and progress so Far:

Under current legislation power plants that produce 50MW or below are not subject to the terms of national planning consent; the Bill aims to address perceived loopholes in employment regulations that have allegedly resulted in the exploitation of migrant workers.

The same Bill was presented by the same member in the 2015-16 session of Parliament. That Bill did not progress past its first reading in the House of Commons.

Associated Legislation:

Parking Places (Variation of Charges) Bill 2016-17

Reporting Stage: The Bill had its first reading in the Housing of Commons on 29 June 2016 through the Ballot procedure. The Bill's second reading in the House of Lords took place on 24 February, with the Committee stage yet to be announced.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Make provision in relation to the procedure to be followed by local authorities when varying the charges to be paid in connection with the use of certain parking places.

Concerns and progress so Far

The Bill aims to make it easier for Local Authorities to lower parking charges to promote the economic vitality of town centres. Additionally, the Bill intends for Local Authorities to consult interested parties if they are intending to increase the cost of parking charges.

The Bill was supported by the Government on its Second Reading in November, with Members believing it offers a reform that will have a real, lasting and positive impact on many town centres. However, there has been concern voiced by other Members that Parliament should not pass certain legislation on issues directly relating to local authorities, as this may not take the local picture into account.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Shining a light on asset management

[LocalGov, 26/01/2017](#)

Summary- LED replacement programmes of lighting assets by local authorities can provide an excellent opportunity to capture data which can inform asset management, reports a FM Conway lighting director in the Local Government News.

Brief Analysis-

Of the UK's seven million lighting columns, around 25% are currently being upgraded to energy-efficient LED units. Ahead of any LED replacement scheme, lighting contracts need to: carry out visual inspections to map the asset; undertake electrical tests; understand specific wattages and lighting sources; as well as plotting how many hours each lantern is turned on for each year. This data is vital for asset management and when analysed correctly it can help councils vary lighting output, forecast replacement schedules and manage lifecycle costs.

Associated Emerging Policy:

Shining a light on asset management

Brief Analysis Continued-

A detailed understanding of lighting assets can also help pave the way for the transition to smart cities, as these programmes often install new devices and technologies on existing street furniture, such as lighting columns. Local Authorities in London are already working with designers, engineers and contractors to understand the implications of removing or amalgamating street furniture in this way.

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