



COMMITTEE: HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

Date: June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES THROUGH REGENERATION
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PLACE & REGENERATION

REPORT SUMMARY

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that people's health and the economy can not be viewed independently. Both are a necessary foundation of a resilient, thriving and prosperous society. Wirral is at a major turning point in its economic history with a unique and unprecedented opportunity for change. Over the last two years the Council has continued to work with partners to develop a transformational regeneration programme on the Left Bank of the River Mersey that is of national significance. Our strategic vision represents the most transformational proposals for Wirral since the 1947 Town Plan and presents a significant opportunity to change the lives of our most vulnerable communities by working together to address health, economic and social inequality.

Wirral's programme of economic development and regeneration is therefore a critical part of our collective effort to improve outcomes for local people and to tackle health, economic and social inequalities. This is reflected in both the Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026 and the Public Health Annual Report 2021. Given the significant contribution this work makes to improving the health of the population and the opportunities that currently exist this paper provides the Board with an overview of this work highlighting specific cross cutting activities.

This matter affects all wards within the Borough; it is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Note the programme of work and its contribution to improving health in Wirral.
- Consider aligning the following elements of the Economic Strategy for Wirral with the emerging Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy: the role of anchor institutions, health related worklessness programmes, safe and active travel, health impact assessment and healthy housing.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 There is a well-established and symbiotic relationship between the economy and health therefore the economic strategy and regeneration programme have a major impact on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options are presented.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The health of the population is shaped by the social, economic, commercial and environmental conditions in which people live. Economic development and regeneration are therefore a key part of improving health and reducing inequalities. This is especially pertinent given the current economic challenges facing businesses and families.
- 3.2 The Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026 sets out the ambition to have a prosperous, inclusive economy, helping businesses to thrive and creating jobs and opportunities for all. This objective is delivered through the Economic Strategy for Wirral which sets out the economic vision for the borough, as well as several significant regeneration projects, which will help us to achieve our economic goals.

4.0 TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

- 4.1 Health inequalities are growing in the UK and since 2010, life expectancy improvements have slowed, and people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health. This is reflected in data for Wirral. People born in certain parts of Wirral can unfortunately expect to live shorter lives than those born in other areas. Rather than any biological difference, this is due to preventable and avoidable factors based on the wide range of issues that impact on health over a lifetime.
- 4.2 Health inequalities are not however inevitable, and the gaps in good health are therefore not fixed. Creating fair and quality employment and opportunities for all, putting health equity and wellbeing at the heart of local economic planning and strategy, and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities are some of the best interventions to minimise the gap in health between people.

5.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

- 5.1 Wirral is at an important point in its economic history. Places throughout the UK are being challenged to come forward with ambitious plans for economic renewal as part of the government's Levelling Up agenda.

- 5.2 The Council and its partners have embarked on a transformational regeneration programme along the 'Left Bank' of the River Mersey stretching from New Brighton to Bromborough, with a particular focus on the creation of a sustainable, waterfront urban garden community in Birkenhead, underpinned by the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and Local Plan.
- 5.3 This presents a unique opportunity to use our significant regeneration programme and emerging government backed initiatives to build on our growing sector strengths, support accessible opportunities for our residents, and lever new investment to the area.
- 5.4 The Economic Strategy for Wirral 2021 - 2026 provides the opportunity to make sure Wirral is fully aligned with this new policy backdrop and to provide a fresh articulation of Wirral's economic and social objectives. This strategy is intended to provide a high-level framework for Wirral over a five-year period. It will guide our local decisions on projects and programmes and inform our detailed yearly action plans, all underpinned by regular performance review and evaluation of progress.
- 5.5 Redressing the economic differences within the borough is a key principle of the Strategy as set out in the vision to create "*vibrant places, where communities and businesses thrive and people choose to live, work and visit. A rebalanced borough that stands out for its achievements on fairness, reducing inequalities and building local wealth. A borough that is celebrated for delivering new and big ideas, working jointly with others and for prioritising environmental sustainability*". This ambition to 'narrow the gap' between our communities economically complements efforts to reduce health inequalities and to achieve sustainable health improvement in our communities tackling the root causes of poor health.

6.0 Creating fair and quality employment and opportunities for all

- 6.1 Being in good employment protects health, while unemployment, particularly long- term unemployment, contributes significantly to poor health. Good employment opportunities are therefore fundamental to improving health outcomes. As well as being vital to individual health, an economically active population enables sustainable economically prosperous communities.
- 6.2 Unemployment and health related worklessness have presented longstanding challenges within the borough. The pandemic has amplified these challenges resulting in a fall in employment and increased health related inactivity. The Public Health Annual Report 2020/2021 recognises these challenges and recommends that "*Employment support services and skills development programmes are available, accessible and sustainable to ensure income maximisation and support those most susceptible to job loss and job insecurity*".

6.3 Local employment services, including Community Connectors and Reach Out delivered by Involve North West, continue to respond to supporting local people and their families. The experiences and outcomes of people using these services was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2021. In an increasingly challenging economic environment and following the immediate impacts of the pandemic these services, alongside social protection measures, will provide critical support to local people and ultimately contribute to improving immediate and longer-term health outcomes focusing on communities with high levels of poor health and unemployment.

7.0 Putting health equity and wellbeing at the heart of local economic planning

7.1 The levels of inequality across Wirral are unacceptable and too many people are experiencing multiple deprivation. Many residents, particularly in the east of the borough, experience a range of physical and mental health issues, and are often detached from the labour market or employed in fragile jobs that offer them too little security and little prospect for progression. Creating an inclusive economy is a key principle of the Economic Strategy for Wirral and part of how the economic, and health, gap will be narrowed within Wirral.

7.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board, and the partner organisations that constitute it, can play a key role in delivering these ambitions. All our anchor institutions – in both the public and private sectors – can better orientate their purchasing to ensure that residents and businesses benefit to a greater extent and that providers are delivering genuine local social value through contract delivery.

7.3 Stimulating the local labour market, offering good quality employment and creating opportunities for entry, skills and career development are also ways in which our anchor institutions can contribute to improving outcomes for local people and reducing economic and health inequalities.

8.0 Developing healthy and sustainable places and communities

8.1 It is estimated 75% of people's health depends on the space and the environment in which they live. The place where we spend most of our time therefore has a huge influence on how healthy we are and the homes and communities in which we live can either improve health or worsen it.

8.2 Planning and infrastructure always has an impact on health. A new Local Plan is being prepared to shape the future of the Borough between 2021 and 2037. The Local Plan Submission Draft sets out a vision for how Wirral will change as a place over the next 15 years. At the heart of the Local Plan is the regeneration of the 'Left Bank' of the River Mersey and Birkenhead in particular. The proposals set out in the Submission Draft will transform Birkenhead over the next 10 to 15 years addressing several decades of decline and the existing social and economic deprivation. The comprehensive regeneration programme presents opportunities to improve health and

wellbeing through the design of places and new homes and access to services through co-location.

- 8.3 Wirral is one of few Councils that have used Health Impact Assessment as part of its Local Plan development to understand health impacts to maximise positive effects and implement measures to mitigate negative ones. We are using this approach to build Health Impact Assessment into our regeneration programme building in health as well as high quality urban design and sustainability. Furthermore, within the new Local Plan, Health Impact Assessment will be required for development of 10 or more houses, and development likely to have significant impact on health and wellbeing. To consider how we will assess and respond to Health Impact Assessment we have recently partnered with URBACT Health Cities programme to support us to do this. Anchor partners can also utilise this methodology to ensure infrastructure develops in a way that benefits health.
- 8.4 A warm and safe home is essential for good health. Poor housing conditions, overcrowding, temporary accommodation, fuel poverty, homelessness and insecurity are a risk to health. Affordable, quality housing is not only, therefore, a basic need but a major contributor to an individual's wellbeing. Some of the most vulnerable groups in our community are however among those most likely to live in poor housing. Housing, and its impact on health, is a broad and complex area covering a wide range of issues.
- 8.5 As well as the Local Plan and Left Bank regeneration programme, which intends to deliver a significant uplift in housing and rebalance the borough's housing stock, there are several initiatives that the Council, with its Partners, is using to improve existing housing in Wirral specifically targeted at improving health, reducing the gap in inequalities, and providing improved outcomes for wellbeing along with inclusive economy. These include selective licensing, healthy homes, landlord accreditation, empty properties, adaptations within the home, targeted retrofit programmes and home energy conservation. Improvements to existing stock alongside wider regeneration activity for new supply is crucial. This is recognised along with the inclusive economy agenda not just being about creating jobs it is about bridging the gap on inequalities and ensuring that everyone is able to reach their potential in life. Having a home that is affordable and of a good quality is fundamental to achieve in life chances, without this there are so many barriers which widen the inequality health gap.
- 8.6 Being able to travel for work, amenities and social connectivity promotes good health and a prosperous economy. In recognition the Economic Strategy for Wirral highlights a safe and effective sustainable transport network as crucial, to improve quality of place, to contribute towards zero carbon, and to remove barriers to residents and businesses accessing work and training. Furthermore, the easiest way to increase physical activity is to build cycling and walking into our daily routines. There is a large disparity in car ownership within Wirral, with 2011 census data showing that in the most deprived ward

55% of households do not have access to a car compared to just 10% in the least deprived ward. Research shows that in households without access to a car, 50% of all trips are taken through walking, compared to 23% of trips for those in households with access to a car. These disparities result in the residents of deprived communities feeling the impacts of others' travel more despite travelling less, as drivers from surrounding areas travel through their areas and neighbourhoods. This is evidenced through Wirral's road collision statistics which show that the majority of road traffic collisions are occurring in areas with the lowest levels of car ownership. Health and Wellbeing Board Partners can support this by looking at opportunities to enable active travel and to make services accessible in local communities.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

11.1 This report and work referenced within it has been developed by Place and Regeneration and Public Health teams working collaboratively.

12.0 RELEVANT RISKS

12.1 The challenging economic climate presents some short- and long-term risk to delivering outcome improvement and has the potential to increase economic and health inequalities in the short and long term. Flexible approaches and focusing on long term strategy goals will help to mitigate some of the associated risks.

12.2 Some of the services described within this report are currently commissioned for a specified period using grants and or other short-term funding. They are not therefore secured for the longer term, which places a great risk on services for unemployed residents in the borough.

13.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

10.1 No public engagement or consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report. However, the schemes of work referenced within the report engage with all relevant stakeholders.

14.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.
- 14.1 The Equality Impact Review relevant to the work programmes referenced within this paper is attached via link below: [Equality Impact Assessments | www.wirral.gov.uk](https://www.wirral.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments/)

15.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The implications of the content and recommendations contained within this report have been considered within the programmes included with this report.

16.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This report describes the reciprocal relationship between the economy and health. The Economic Strategy for Wirral Community makes a key contribution to reducing disparities in health.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Plan 2021 – 2026 <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/3552/wirral-plan-2026.pdf>

Economic Strategy for Wirral 2021 - 2026
<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/strategies-and-plans/wirral-economic-strategy/>

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for Wirral 2020 - 2021
<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/local-inequalities/2021-public-health-annual-report/>

Institute of Health Equity (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives' (The Marmot Review)
<https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

The Health Foundation (2022) Addressing the leading risk factors for ill health
<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/addressing-the-leading-risk-factors-for-ill-health>

Wirral Intelligence Service (2021) Wirral JSNA. Economy, Business and Skills
<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/this-is-wirral/economy-business-and-skills/>

HM Government (2021) Build Back Better: our plan for growth
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth>

Health Equity Institute (2020) Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On
On <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/the-marmot-review-10-years-on>

HM Government (2019) Public Health England. Health Matters: Health and Work.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-health-and-work/health-matters-health-and-work#how-phe-can-support-you>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Economy, Regeneration & Development Committee Economic Strategy for Wirral 2021 – 2026	November 2021
Health & Wellbeing Board Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2020	September 2021
Policy & Resources Committee Wirral Local Plan 2021 – 2037 Submission Draft	March 2022
Health & Wellbeing Board Health & Employment	November 2021
Adult Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee Public Health & Housing	February 2020