



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 21 November 2023**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>NEW COUNCIL PLAN</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report sets out a new Council Plan which will run for the four-year electoral term from 2023 to 2027 following the local government elections earlier this year. The Council Plan is the primary document in the Council's Policy framework. It has been developed to align with the Council's refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). In this regard, it supports the Council's progress towards financial stability and continuous improvement in response to the External Assurance Review commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in November 2021 and Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge in April 2022.

The new Council Plan builds on and replaces the existing Wirral Plan 2021-26 which was approved by Council 6 September 2021 and refreshed on 11 July 2022. It also supersedes the Council's Improvement Plan which was approved by Council 11 July 2022. The new Plan acts as a single plan for the organisation, articulating a vision and priorities for the next four years to deliver in line with the needs of residents whilst transforming and modernising the Council to maximise opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The Council Plan impacts on all wards in the borough and is a key decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Policy and Resources Committee is requested to recommend the new Council Plan to Council for approval at its next meeting on 4 December.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Council Plan is the primary document in the Council's Policy Framework as set out in Part 3 Section A of the Council's constitution. The Council Plan drives all of the Council's operational activity in terms of the day-to-day management and delivery of Council services. It also sets out the plans for organisational change and improvement.
- 1.2 The Policy and Resources committee is requested to recommend the Plan to Council for approval so the Council Plan can be adopted for the four year term of this electoral cycle. This will enable the organisation to have clear focus on the priorities for delivery in line with the needs of Wirral residents.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 As the Council Plan is a central component of the Council's policy framework, it is a constitutional requirement and therefore no other options have been considered.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The current Wirral Plan 2021 – 26, was approved by Council on 6 September 2021. It was developed as the Council emerged from the pandemic and transitioned from the emergency response system onto a more business-as-usual footing. A one-year refresh of the Wirral Plan was approved by Council on 11 July 2022 in advance of the Council moving to a four-year, whole Council election scheme from May 2023. A summary of Wirral Plan performance in 2022/23 is included as Appendix 2 to this report. Wirral Plan items still in train or outstanding have been incorporated into the new Council Plan 2023-27. The performance report includes the key achievements in year against the five Wirral Plan priorities.
- 3.2 The Wirral Improvement Plan was approved by Council on 11 July 2022. The Improvement plan was developed in response to the recommendations from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' External Assurance Review reports published on 2 November 2021. The plan also took account of the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge and return visit undertaken in April and November 2022 respectively. Improvement Plan progress has been reviewed by the Independent Assurance Panel to ensure the Council has been responding positively to the recommendations from the External Assurance Review and Peer Challenge. An update on progress against the Improvement Plan is included as Appendix 3 to this report. It is intended that any items outstanding from that plan will be incorporated within the new Council Plan specifically under the Efficient, Effective and Accessible Council theme.
- 3.3 The new Council Plan has been developed over the last 3 months and following engagement with Group Leaders, all political groups and Policy & Service committees. The plan is developed around a new vision: Working Together to Promote Fairness and Opportunity for People and Communities. This acknowledges the need to work collectively in the best interests of the whole borough and to meet

the diverse needs of all communities. The plan sets out 7 priorities to focus our work over the next 4 years:

- Deliver high quality, efficient, universal services to all residents,
- Prioritise those with the greatest needs,
- Deliver Council services within the means of the Council budget,
- Be prepared to innovate and face the future,
- Play our part in addressing the climate emergency and protecting our environment,
- Work across communities with third-sector organisations and partners to improve all residents' life chances,
- Continue our ambitious regeneration programme through increased investment, jobs and new businesses throughout the borough.

3.4 The Council Plan is built around 6 themes which align with the Council's governance and committee system:

1. Early help for children and families – aligns with Children's, Family & Education Committee.
2. Promoting independence and healthier lives – aligns with Adult Care and Public Health Committee.
3. People-focussed regeneration – aligns with Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee
4. Protecting our environment – aligns with Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee.
5. Safe and resilient communities – aligns with Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee.
6. An efficient and effective Council – aligns with Policy & Resources Committee.

3.5 A performance management framework is being developed that will ensure the ability to measure progress against the new Council Plan over the next four years. For each theme, the following has been developed:

- A set of outcomes which articulate the benefits the Council is seeking to achieve.
- A series of deliverables i.e. what the Council is planning to do to meet those outcomes.
- A set of measures and performance indicators that will be developed and used to monitor progress.

Following plan approval, further engagement will be scheduled in January and February to enable committees to input into the performance management framework. Once approved, the framework will be regularly reviewed and reported to Policy Committees alongside quarterly financial performance reporting.

3.6 All Members of the Council have been given the opportunity to feed into the new plan through group and committee briefings and question and answer sessions. Once approved, a programme of further Elected Member and staff engagement will be delivered to ensure there is Council-wide understanding and support for the plan.

The Plan will provide the framework for annual business planning and performance management at the directorate, team and individual level.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report. The Council Plan has been developed alongside a draft refresh of the Council's MTFS that will be approved as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process in the New Year. The alignment of the Council Plan with the MTFS provides the opportunity to ensure there is a more joined up approach to performance reporting in respect of budget performance and Council Plan delivery.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising as a result of this report. The Council plan has been developed alongside a draft refresh of the MTFS which reflects the assumed resources available to the Council over the next four years.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 Failure to have an effective Council Plan in place would result in the Council not having an identified vision or clearly stated priorities. This would undermine Council governance, decision-making and would be damaging to the Council's reputation in the context of external scrutiny in the Council's improvement progress. This report mitigates this risk by proposing a new plan.

7.2 Subject to the approval of the new Council Plan by Council 4 December, the Corporate Risk Register will be reviewed and refreshed.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Council Plan has been developed in consultation with the Council's political leadership. This has involved a series of Group Leader workshops from July through to September.

8.2 There has been wider engagement with Elected Members through dedicated briefings and question and answer sessions for each of the political groups and with Policy Committees throughout October. An all-Member briefing was provided on 30 October as a means to secure any final input before the final draft of the Council Plan has been worked up.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. The Council Plan seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for delivering inclusive services that benefit all residents in the borough. Specific Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken

against all new initiatives and projects developed to support implementation of the plan.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no direct environment or climate change implications arising directly from this report. However, the Council Plan will ensure the Council plays its part in responding to the climate emergency by supporting initiatives that protect the environment or the achievement of the Council's net zero target.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The Council Plan will provide a framework for ensuring that opportunities to secure community wealth benefits can be realised systematically across all plan themes and activities.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Council Plan 2023-27  
Appendix 2 – Wirral Plan 2021-26 Monitoring Report  
Appendix 3 – Wirral Improvement Plan Progress Report

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

External Assurance Reports (Ada Burns / CIPFA)  
LGA Corporate Peer Challenge outcome and revisit reports.  
Wirral Plan 2021-26  
Wirral Improvement Plan

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in accordance with Section (a) of its Terms of Reference, "formulate, co-ordinate and implement corporate policies and strategies".

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>March 2023</b>

<b>Council</b>	<b>11/07/22</b>
<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>27/06/22</b>