

21 December 2023

Report Title:	WIRRAL WAYS TO WORK PROGRAMME: STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND GAP FUNDING
Report of:	HEAD OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to enable the Director of Regeneration and Place to consider and approve the allocation of the funding from the Strategic Investment Funds which have been received by way of grant funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for the purpose of delivering the Wirral Ways to Work programme to the value of £1,020,000.

This proposal directly supports the following key theme of the Wirral Plan 2021-2026:

- A prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations.

This is a key decision, and this matter affects all Wards within the borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Director of Regeneration and Place is recommended to approve the allocation of the Strategic Investment funding as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the attached report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Ways to Work Programme is helping to address worklessness in Wirral. Wirral is an area which has had persistent levels of worklessness exceeding regional and national averages for many years. The Wirral Ways to Work programme has been identified as an essential activity in the Economic Strategy 2021-2026 to tackle the level of worklessness across the borough. The services deliver accessible community-based services which ensures that out of work residents are provided with the relevant 1:1 support to compete both for jobs currently available in the labour market and for future opportunities created through the wider regeneration programme. This programme is designed to focus on those furthest away from the labour market and in the most deprived communities in Wirral, complementing the mainstream services provided by the Department of Work and Pensions.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 **Do Nothing:** The Council takes no action and did not extend the Wirral Ways to Work Programme. This option would leave a significant gap in Employment Support Services across the borough and would also impact the delivery of the wider Ways to Work Programme managed by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Wirral Ways to Work Programme is part of the LCR Combined Authority Ways to Work programme. The programme is designed to engage eligible workless young people and adults and support their progression into education, employment, and training via a suite of flexible, tailored employment support services.
- 3.2 The Ways to Work programme supports a number of key pledges in the Wirral Plan. The current programme has been delivering since April 2016 and has achieved the following outcomes as of 30th September 2023:
- Engaged 10,264 Wirral residents onto the programme.
 - Supported 6,134 Wirral residents back into employment or training; and
 - Positive outcome rate of 60%.

This level of performance is extremely successful for a programme of this size and the nature of clients the programme engages with being furthest away from the labour market. The wider LCR Ways to Work Programme typically achieves a positive outcome rate of securing employment or training of 42% which shows Wirral is outperforming the city region average.

- 3.3 Wirral Ways to Work has provided immense benefit to residents who have been supported into local and regional employment and training opportunities. This not only supports a more inclusive Wirral economy, but also improves the health and wellbeing and life chances of individuals and their families through increased household incomes, improved mental and physical health, personal confidence, social networks and aspirations.
- 3.4 The Wirral Ways to Work Programme has been funded through European Social Fund (ESF) since 2016 to 31st September 2023. From the 1st April 2024 UK Shared Prosperity funds are available for employment and skills activity and the Council is

working with the LCRCA to secure funding for the continuation of these services until 31st March 2025. This leaves a 6-month gap period between the end of ESF and the beginning of UKSPF, the 6 Local Authorities applied to the LCRCA for SIF funding to cover this gap period, and this application was successful. The decision to accept the SIF grant funding allocation of £1,020,000 was taken by the Section 151 Officer in accordance with 2(d) of Part(C) of the Constitution 'Overview and Scheme of Delegations of Authority to Officers'. In respect to the receipt of grant funding, express delegation is given to the Section 151 Officer. Relevant Chief Officers are required to subsequently report the acceptance of the grant funding to the appropriate Committee.

3.5 In September 2022 the Director of Regeneration and Place authorised via an Officer Decision Notice of the award of a new contract to Involve Northwest for delivery of the Worklessness Support Service for the period of 17 months from 1st November 2022 – 31st March 2024.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The value of the SIF Grant funding agreement is £1,020,000. Table 1 shows how the funding is distributed between services:

Budget Heading	Amount
Internal Staff Costs	£76,315
Careers Information Advice and Guidance Service Contract	£50,000
Worklessness Support Service Contract	£480,000
ILM Programme (delivered by CYP 14-19 Team)	£413,685
TOTAL	£1,020,000

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Services have reviewed the Grant Funding Agreement from the LCRCA and the Section 151 Officer has signed the agreement to accept the funds. The grant funding may be subject to clawback if the Council does not comply with the conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement.

5.2 Paragraph 4.1 includes 2 external services, that have been procured by the Council for the Worklessness Support Service and the Careers Information Advice and Guidance Service and the contracts for these services have been legally completed and are in place to deliver these services.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 Securing grant funding from SIF funds enables the Council to fund the relevant compliance and support roles that are needed to ensure successful delivery of the Wirral Ways to Work Programme.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Financial

- 7.1 Financial risk to the Council for the delivery of the Wirral Ways to Work Programme has been mitigated by the acceptance of the external SIF grant funding.

Reputational:

- 7.2 Reputational damage to the Council in not continuing the Wirral Ways to Work Programme and the negative impact on unemployed and economically inactive Wirral residents has been mitigated by acceptance of the external SIF Grant Funding.

Operational/contractual:

- 7.3 Any operational or contractual issues to the Council's current contract with Involve Northwest for the delivery of the Worklessness Support Service and Career Connect for the delivery of the Careers Information Advice and Guidance service within the programme has been mitigated by the acceptance of SIF Grant Funding.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This project supports the Inclusive Economy theme of Wirral's Economic Strategy which was developed in full consultation with partner organisations and residents.
- 8.2 Further consultation has been undertaken to brief the Chair and Party Spokespersons of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee on this report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The 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 (EIA) 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.
- 9.2 The potential impact of the Worklessness Support Service Contract has been reviewed with regard to equality and links to the existing EIA conducted for Wirral's Economic Strategy, which can be found here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/files/equality-impact-assessment-wirral-economic-strategy-2021-2026.pdf/download?inline>
No material changes to the EIA are required because of this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Delivery of the Worklessness Support Service is based in a range of accessible community locations across the borough, therefore reducing the requirement for residents to travel to a central Wirral location to access the service. The procurement criteria for this contract included a social value assessment, with the recommended supplier providing some measures in relating to carbon savings from energy efficiency measures within their tender response. Involve Northwest has a full organisational sustainability plan for all employees to adhere to.
- 10.2 Consideration of the climate emergency is a key consideration in the delivery of the Ways to Work Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) and the Careers Information Advice and Guidance projects. Consideration is given from recognising delivery locations and facilities to the inclusion of environment and climate in the businesses supported

through the expression of interest process. The use of technology to reduce the carbon footprint associated with delivering these projects is maximised.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to economic growth which reorganises local economies to be fairer and stops wealth flowing out of communities, towns, and cities, and instead places control of this wealth into the hands of local people, communities, businesses and organisations. A key theme in the Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy is Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets and the Wirral Ways to Work Programme supports residents of Wirral back into the labour market via a community-based delivery model.

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APPENDICES

n/a

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s66692/Appendix%201%20External%20Investment%20Panel%20Report.pdf>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Economy Regeneration and Development Committee- European Structural and Investment Fund programme for England 2014-2020: Wirral Ways to Work Programme	4 th March 2021
Policy and Resources Committee European Structural and Investment Fund programme for England 2014-2020: Wirral Ways to Work Programme	17 th March 2021
Officer Decision Notice: Worklessness Support Service Tender outcome report	28 th September 2022