



## ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>SIMPLIFICATION PATHFINDER PILOT PROGRAMME – REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

Further to the commitment by the Director of Regeneration and Place at the December 2024 meeting of this Committee, a review of projects within the Simplification Pathfinder Programme has been undertaken to further understand deliverability of schemes and to provide further assurance that the grant funding will be spent by the end of March 2026, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Seven projects were selected to be reviewed as they presented a higher level of risk to delivery. Projects included in the review either forecast over the allocated budget or reported completion after the planned delivery date.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024, MHCLG informed the Council of an opportunity to extend the end date of the Programme to March 2027. Ministerial approval is required. Extensions to projects will be by exception only. The potential for an extended delivery window has been considered in the review process to identify where an extension request would be required.

Progress has been made on delivery of the programme with £19m spent to date. Nonetheless, inflation on build cost and the overall economic position has had an implication on the overall cost profile. As a consequence, it is imperative that more focus is provided on schemes that are already in delivery and have a prospect of being delivered.

This report sets out a requirement for additional funding for:

1. Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard;
2. Birkenhead Market project, and
3. New Ferry Public Realm.

In addition, further to correspondence from Big Heritage CIC in December 2024 requesting an amendment to the scope of the Transport Museum project was considered, an updated Business Case was submitted on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025. This Business Case is one of the seven projects included in this review process. This report considers that business case, the outcome of the review, and sets out recommendations for reductions and reallocations within the programme.

This paper aligns to the Council Plan priority of delivering ambitious regeneration projects across the borough. It ensures that projects within the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot programme are delivered within the grant funding envelope available aligning to the priorities of the Council Plan 2023-2027.

This is a Key Decision. This report has implications for Birkenhead and Tranmere and Bromborough wards.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee is recommended to;

1. Rescind the resolution of Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee of 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 to allocate £4,500,000 to Big Heritage CIC.
2. Approve the award of grant funding in the sum of £750,000 to the Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard project.
3. Approve the award of grant funding in the sum of £2,000,000 to the Birkenhead Market project.
4. Approve the award of grant funding in the sum of £3,447,288 to the New Ferry Public Realm project.
5. Approve the withdrawal of grant funding to the sum of £2,000,000 from the Price Street Car Park project.
6. Not approve the Transport Museum/Ticket to Ride proposed revised business case submitted by Big Heritage CIC.
7. Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to:
  - a. submit to MHCLG an application for timescale extensions for the Waterfront Infrastructure and New Ferry projects;
  - b. allocate by way of grant funding of up to a value of £1,500,000 to Big Heritage CIC for the delivery of the renovation of Wirral Transport Museum upon the submission of a revised business case; and
  - c. re allocate any funding that becomes available up to a value of £500,000 to ensure projects in delivery are provided with timely funding as appropriate.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1. In accordance with the relevant Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and MHCLG, the Council must spend all grant funding by the end of the funding period, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. Adjustments to the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot programme need to be made to ensure delivery of the agreed outputs and outcomes.
- 1.2. If adjustments are not made to the programme, the funding gap will remain and there is a risk of non-delivery of the agreed outputs and outcomes in the investment plan. The adjustments recommended in this paper ensure the programme maintains good value for money while delivering effective regeneration outcomes.
- 1.3. Big Heritage CIC submitted an updated business case to officers for consideration on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Following a review of the updated business case a recommendation has been presented.

### **2. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1. Other options have been considered and have been discounted. Specifically, if the Council adopts a “do nothing” approach, then the risks are that the Council may:
  - Not be able to deploy grant funding within the spend profile timetable, and deliver the agreed outputs and outcomes detailed in the submitted investment plan, risking unspent funding being returned to central government.
  - Not be able to deliver proposals across the priority project areas.
  - Risk additional financial pressures if projects are not delivered and cannot be capitalised and claimed under the grant. These revenue costs will then have to be absorbed by other council budgets.
  - Risk reputational damage, potentially leading to a decrease in confidence in the community and central government to deliver on its agreed outputs and outcomes.
- 2.2. If the Council does nothing, then the mitigation for the above risks will result in key strategic and pipeline projects being paused or indefinitely postponed. Please see Section 7 for further information on relevant risks, impacts and mitigations.

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard

- 3.1. The Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard project needed £4,000,000 additional to the original allocation in March 2024.
- 3.2. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024 an Officer Decision Notice was published for the acceptance of the tender and contract award for the Birkenhead Town Centre Movement Projects, which includes the Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard projects. The budget for the contract was identified in the wider Future High Street Fund as detailed in Table 1 below. The formal virement was dependent on the budget being confirmed for the Birkenhead Market project which was to Committee 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024. The Price Street Car Park project (previously Europa Residential) was placed on hold pending the outcome of the Birkenhead Market project.

*Table 1 Budget identified in March 2024 with the Future High Street Fund to allocate budget for the Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard contract.*

<b>Project</b>	<b>Original allocation £</b>	<b>Amendment £</b>	<b>Updated budget £</b>
Birkenhead Market	14,000,000	-4,000,000	10,000,000
Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard	6,873,303	4,000,000	10,873,303
<b>Total £</b>		<b>0.00</b>	

- 3.3. The decision to enter the contract with John Graham Construction Limited was made in recognition of its strategic importance and its critical role in safeguarding Active Travel funding (in the sum of £3.85m). This contract was essential not only to protect existing and future financial resources, but also to support the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, a key priority for the Council. The Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard project represents a vital step in regenerating the town centre, attracting investment, and enhancing local infrastructure. Without this agreement, there was a significant risk that essential funding could be lost, delaying regeneration efforts.
- 3.4. The Director of Regeneration and Place informed this Committee at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024 that a review of the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme would be undertaken to ensure grant funding was not allocated to projects that could not be delivered. A summary of the review can

be found in Appendix 1 (Exempt). The Director of Regeneration and Place was authorised to re-allocate funds into the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot programme for future re-allocation, should the conditions of the relevant grant funding not be complied with by 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

3.5. At its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board recommended to the Council that funding be withdrawn from both Woodside Ferry Village (£1,145,654) and Birkenhead Priory (reallocation funding only, £80,585). The Woodside Ferry Village sum has been reduced by the sum of £28,951 due to the pre-grant funding (£19,800) and a payment towards the outline business case (£9,151) already being spent. This revises the Woodside Ferry Village reduction to £1,116,703. Including the Priory reduction, a total of £1,197,288 was recommended to be re-allocated back into the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme, as per Table 2.

3.6. An officer decision notice made by the Director or Regeneration and Place was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025.

*Table 2 Summary of the decision to withdraw funds from projects that did not meet the pre-grant conditions by the 20 January 2025.*

Project	Original allocation £	Requested funding £	Reduction £	Remaining allocation £
Woodside Ferry Village	396,000	749,654	1,116,703	0.00
Birkenhead Priory	353,000	80,585	80,585	353,000
<b>Total Reduction £</b>			<b>1,197,288</b>	

### **Review Process**

3.7. Officers have identified projects within the programme that were at risk of not delivering or spending in line with current grant requirements. Grant monitoring and evaluation returns, and programme assurance monitoring processes were used to identify these projects. Seven projects were identified as follows;

1. New Ferry Public Realm
2. Price Street Car Park
3. Birkenhead Priory
4. Woodside Ferry Village
5. Transport Museum
6. Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard; and
7. Birkenhead Market

The review for Woodside Ferry Village is not included in the summary contained in exempt Appendix 1 of this report as subsequent to the review being commissioned, this project has been withdrawn from the Simplification Pathfinder Programme as referenced in paragraph 3.6 above.

- 3.8. IMB Management Ltd were commissioned in December 2024 to undertake a review of the 7 identified projects, with a focus on deliverability within grant funding requirements to spend the funding by March 2026 and delivery in line with the investment plan.
- 3.9. It is necessary to prioritise projects that are currently in contract and have a funding gap to ensure successful delivery and completion of the programme. Currently two projects have reported as forecast to be delivered beyond the agreed end to the Programme of March 2026. The projects include the Waterfront Infrastructure Programme and New Ferry Public Realm project.

#### **New Ferry**

- 3.10. The original allocation for the New Ferry Public Realm project was £623,257 which was based on a basic, low-cost scheme that would involve reopening the pedestrianised section of Bebington Road to vehicle traffic. Following initial public consultation with stakeholders in the area, the proposed scheme was revised to ensure that the pedestrianised element remained, and the public realm scheme was in line with the outcome of the consultation responses. The amended scheme incorporates improvements to address road safety concerns, anti-social behaviour issues and provides an enhanced and appealing environment which would benefit the town's retail centre. These revisions to the scheme received strong support in a further consultation exercise held in September 2022.
- 3.11. The request for funds to deliver the New Ferry Project in the Business Case submitted in August 2024 totalled £5.6m with the inclusion of three different options for delivery depending on budget available, £210,399 of the original allocation has been spent on design fees and is not included in the ask of £5.6m. Subsequently, £1.2m was secured from the Pathfinder Programme as agreed by this Committee at its meeting on 4 December 2024 subject to further funding to deliver a comprehensive scheme being secured. £1.2m secured from pathfinder funding in addition to the remaining original grant funding brings the total funding available for the project to £1,619,709. A further £490,000 has been confirmed from the Strategic Acquisition fund with the total funding now available being £2,109,709. Officers have confirmed that the preferred option to deliver a quality scheme is the highest cost of £5.6m resulting in a funding gap of £3,447,288. This was identified as a key risk in the review. The recommendation contained in this report to allocate £3,447,288 mitigates this shortfall providing a total budget of £5,556,994.

- 3.12. The budget of £5,556,994 would enable the preferred scheme to be delivered which will provide sustainable public realm improvements. This will compliment and align with wider regeneration in the area, including the construction of 77 new houses. The project, which is currently at RIBA stage 4, consists of a new public car park with approximately 64 spaces. The preferred scheme includes high-quality public realm space with both hard and soft landscaping and traffic calming measures. It also includes low carbon, natural stone topped surface, which can be easily replaced and maintained, resulting in significant reductions in the carbon footprint of the scheme, and minimisation of the financial burden on future maintenance costs included in the Council's Highways budget.
- 3.13. The Council's procurement team have confirmed that the procurement strategy for this scheme can be delivered via framework ensuring timely appointment of an appropriate contractor. In addition, it has been confirmed by the Council's Highways and Infrastructure team that this project does not require planning permission and can be delivered under permitted development, as it is located on adopted highway.
- 3.14. At its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024, the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board recommended that if any additional funding were to become available that this be allocated to this project. However, this recommendation was not endorsed by this Committee at its meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024 on the basis of a full review being conducted.
- 3.15. The review concluded that due to delays in securing funding, it should also be recommended that this project is included in the application for a timeline extension. Which will allow sufficient time for highways approvals and utility diversions. The recommendations in this report mitigate the key risks identified in the review for the project, mitigating the shortfall in funding allowing the selection of the preferred option which include high quality sustainable materials.

### **Birkenhead Market**

- 3.16. The Birkenhead Market project is now at an advanced stage of design development, as design development has progressed the project team can confirm that the funds required total £12m. This is £2m above the current allocation in the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme. This committee authorised the Director of Regeneration and Place to allocate up to £13.7m to the Birkenhead Market project on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024. A revised schedule will be provided by the contractor including an estimated completion date.
- 3.17. Planning permission has been secured, and a procurement strategy is in place. In addition, the soft strip work has been procured and implemented, the contractor has been appointed to commence the stage 4 design with a target

completion of the works in March 2026. At completion of the stage 4 design period a contract programme will be agreed. There will be a small element of the CAT B fit-out work to be undertaken between March 2026 and the planned opening date in July 2026, however the majority of funding will be spent by March 2026.

- 3.18. The Birkenhead Market project will provide a new offer to residents which encompasses traditional retail, fresh food retailing, service industries and hospitality. The Market will also include world food kitchens and bar, event space and flexible leisure space which could be used for events such as the Youth Market, aligning with plans to be part of the creative quarter within Birkenhead and the Council's Birkenhead 2040 framework.

#### **Price Street**

- 3.19. This project is currently at RIBA 2 and is progressing through pre application advice, with an aspiration to submit a full planning application in Spring 25/26.
- 3.20. The review has highlighted concerns in spend by the current deadline of March 2026 for this site. This is due to a viability gap, and a decrease in outputs compared to the investment plan submitted to central government from 189 dwellings to 76 dwellings.
- 3.21. The review concluded that in addition to the reduction in number of dwellings delivered it would be highly unlikely for the full allocation of funding to be spent by March 2026. It is therefore recommended that £2m is withdrawn from this project, ensuring value for money of the pathfinder grant funding.

#### **Transport Museum/Ticket to Ride**

- 3.22. At its meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 this Committee resolved that:
1. The Full Business Case for Transport Museum be approved; and
  2. The re-allocation of £4,500,000 by way of grant funding to Big Heritage CIC for the delivery of the expansion and renovation of Wirral Transport Museum as set out in the Full Business Case be approved; and
  3. The Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to finalise any associated grant agreement with Big Heritage CIC.
- 3.23. There is currently no Grant Funding Agreement in place in relation to the resolution detailed above.
- 3.24. On 12th January 2025 Big Heritage CIC submitted an updated full business case to officers for consideration, see exempt Appendix 2. This identified an



opportunity to include an additional site to the project and sought to amend the scope of their original project.

- 3.25. The updated business case detailed the addition of a site at Pacific Road and provided a description of the dual site museum. Pacific Road is located at the opposite end of the tram tracks to the current approved site at Taylor Street. The project aims to restore Pacific Road back to the original use as a dual site museum and establish a visitor attraction, including educational spaces and a retail unit.
- 3.26. The Council owns the freehold to the site at Pacific Road. It is currently leased to Wirral Chamber of Commerce and has 15 years remaining. However, Big Heritage CIC does currently have access to the tramway at Pacific Road under the terms of the relevant agreement.
- 3.27. The review identified a number of risks with this updated proposal, fundamentally Big Heritage CIC do not have any legal interest in the Pacific Road site and in order to achieve this a number of matters would need to be considered including:
  1. The Council would only consider this if there was a viable alternative proposition.
  2. The Chamber would require a reverse premium for the surrender to reflect their lost “profit rent”.
  3. The Council would need to understand how this is funded.
  4. Wirral Chamber of Commerce have advised that vacant possession of Pacific Road can be provided but would need to be excluded from the security provisions of the Landlord and Tenant legislation, this could be open to challenge which could impact on time scales.
  5. Any use of Pacific Road would be conditional on securing Planning consent. A new lease would only complete once planning was secured.
  6. Big Heritage CIC would need to provide sufficient covenant strength to meet its obligation under the lease terms.
- 3.28. In addition, there is unsecured match funding detailed in the Business Case, planning permission has not been obtained and there is no procurement strategy. The review undertaken by IMB Management Ltd concludes that it would be unrealistic to expect to complete this work by March 2026, and given the complexity and the interdependencies particularly around the lease arrangement, funding and planning activities, and the associated timescales needed to work through these, it is unlikely that this project could be delivered by March 2027 either.
- 3.29. The Pacific Road element at a value of £3m as set out in the updated Business Case considered was undeliverable within the timeline of the

Simplification Pathfinder Programme and it is consequently recommended that this is not approved.

- 3.30. As this updated Business Case replaces the Business Case considered by this Committee in July 2024 it is recommended that the resolution taken by this Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be rescinded.
- 3.31. Within the updated Business Case £1.5m had been attributed to improvements to the Taylor St site which was the sole focus of the original Business Case. As this updated business case removes previous risk that had been associated with gaining planning consent it is considered that a reduced project is deliverable. It is recommended that an updated Business Case is submitted by Big Heritage CIC up to the value of £1.5m in line with the allocation for Taylor Street in the business case submitted to officers on January 12, 2025.
- 3.32. The figures attributed to Taylor Street for the updated project changed throughout the review process and have been marked as estimates in the exempt business case appended. The recommendation in this paper aligns with the upper end estimate indicated by Big Heritage for the scheme at Taylor Street.
- 3.33. The recommendation to not approve the updated Business Case is not a reflection of the value of the proposal to the regeneration of Birkenhead, but an assessment of deliverability in line with the grant funding requirements of the pathfinder funding. The Council will continue to collaborate with partners and the third sector to support the regeneration of the borough.

#### **Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard**

- 3.34. The review concluded that this project would be delivered within the timeline set and within the deadline of March 2026, but additional funds would be required to complete the scheme. An additional £750,000 is required as a result of further design fees due to unexpected ground conditions: concrete slabs had not been present where previously thought, costs incurred from utilities being closer to the surface than anticipated and an increase in National Minimum Wage. Value engineering has taken place to mitigate some of the increase in costs, such as changing the design of bollards for a more cost-efficient option.

#### **Waterfront Infrastructure**

- 3.35. Through the Council's Regeneration Programme Management Office monitoring process, the Waterfront Infrastructure Programme has been identified to be included in the extension application to ensure successful delivery. This project consists of two aligned funding pots, the first part being

the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot grant fund (£11,836,721), and the second being a Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) administered Levelling Up Fund grant for Argyle Street. To deliver these in a co-ordinated and best value approach, one single contractor has been appointed. The linking of these two elements, has created efficiency savings, reduces disruption to the residents and businesses in the local area and provides continuous linkages between the waterfront and town centre. Extending the programme will afford the time to finalise the LCRCA grant and allow the placing of a single construction contract to harness the benefits mentioned above. It is therefore recommended that this project is extended to March 2027; to ensure the contractor can sequence works in the least disruptive way for local stakeholders and businesses. Works will commence in early Summer 2025.

3.36. Following the review, the proposed reductions in funding detailed in Table 3 have been recommended to the Simplification Programme Pilot board.

*Table 3. Summary of proposed reduction to projects within the programme following the review. The details of the approved reduction can be found in Table 2.*

<b>Project</b>	<b>Original allocation £</b>	<b>Reduction £</b>	<b>Remaining budget £</b>
Approved reduction (per Table 2)		1,197,288	
Price Street Car Park (previously Europa Residential)	3,307,707	2,000,000	1,307,707
Transport Museum	4,500,000	3,000,000	1,500,000
<b>Total Reduction</b>		<b>6,197,288</b>	

3.37. Dependent on the reductions in Table 3, Table 4 sets out the recommendation for the distribution of funds within the programme. It should be noted that the original allocation for the New Ferry Public Realm project of £623K has not been included in the below figures due to these already being spent and delivered.

*Table 4 Proposed reallocation of funding available.*

<b>Project</b>	<b>Current allocation £</b>	<b>Funding increase £</b>	<b>Amended allocation £</b>
Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard	10,873,303	750,000	11,623,303
Birkenhead Market	10,000,000	2,000,000	12,000,000
New Ferry Public Realm	1,830,105	3,447,288	5,066,994

<b>Project</b>	<b>Current allocation £</b>	<b>Funding increase £</b>	<b>Amended allocation £</b>
<b>Total £</b>		<b>6,197,288</b>	
<b>Unallocated funding remaining</b> (Funding reduction – Funding increase)		<b>0.00</b>	

3.38. The amended allocation for New Ferry Public Realm is minus the figure of £210,399 already spend on design fees as explained in paragraph 3.11.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1. This proposal will prompt changes to the capital monitoring programme. The Director of Finance and finance officers have been engaged as part of the process advising on the most efficient way to progress following approval of this recommendation. A summary of the adjustments to projects within the programme is shown in table 5. The amended allocations of the Woodside Ferry Village project in the sum of £28,951 relates to Table 2, the spend on the Woodside Ferry Village project prior to the withdrawal of funds and withdrawal of the project from the programme. All funding within the programme has been allocated to projects.

*Table 5 Shows allocations by project before and after proposed recommendation in this paper.*

<b>Project</b>	<b>Original allocation £</b>	<b>Amended allocation £</b>	<b>Variance £</b>
Woodside Ferry Village	1,145,654	spent 28,951	-1,116,703
Birkenhead Priory	433,585	353,000	-80,585
Transport Museum	4,500,000	1,500,000	-3,000,000
Price Street Car Park	3,307,707	1,307,707	-2,000,000
Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard	10,873,303	11,623,303	750,000
Birkenhead Market	10,000,000	12,000,000	2,000,000
New Ferry Public Realm	1,830,105	available 5,066,994 spent 210,399	3,447,288
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,466,834</b>	<b>31,466,834</b>	<b>0.00</b>

4.2. If funding is not reallocated and utilised as part of the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot programme, there is a risk of non-delivery of project objectives with an

associated risk that costs incurred will need an alternative funding source, which could present as a financial pressure to the Council.

- 4.3. Financial monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that that funding is used appropriately, and that financial and performance reporting is produced for central government monitoring returns quarterly.
- 4.4. Contingency has been built into projects to ensure resilience across the programme.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. Where a single transaction is less than £5m the MOU allows the council to move funding between projects without further formal approval from MHCLG.
- 5.2. The funding gap for the Charing Cross & Grange Road, Conway & Europa Boulevard project must be mitigated to progress in line with the contractual agreement for the works.
- 5.3. As per the MOU the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot board considers and comments on all recommendations taken to Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee, providing oversight and ensuring progress on delivery of the programme.
- 5.4. Officers met with MHCLG to discuss the recommendations in this report and the potential effects they could have on the original investment plan submitted. MHCLG raised no concerns about the content of the report or the amendments to the programme and reiterated that they do not need to be formally notified for any virements of less than £5m.
- 5.5. MHCLG have confirmed that as long as the programme as a whole maintains value for money and the S151 officer signs off on any amendments, the council will remain within the constraints of the MOU we have entered into.
- 5.6. Any changes to the programme will be reported in the next monitoring return to MHCLG.

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Officers are confident that this process can be completed with current resource in place and will not require any further resource. All teams that will be involved in this process to enable spend of the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot funding have been engaged throughout the process.

## **7. RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1. The proposals within this report mitigate known risks to the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot funding being fully spent. Specifically, the recommendations within this report would mitigate the following risks:
- Not deploying grant funding within the spend profile timetable.
  - Not delivering on agreed outputs and outcomes that are detailed in the investment plan across the priority project areas.
- 7.2. The Project Management Office (PMO) dedicated to the Regeneration and Place directorate has oversight of all projects and ensures that they align with the Council's corporate policy to managing risk. The PMO also aligns to the corporate Programme Management Office under a Head of Profession model which provides oversight, direction, and monitoring of all Council projects. An assessment of the risks, assumptions, issues, and dependencies across the projects in the Simplification Pathfinder programme is captured, and dashboard reporting, data analytics, and gateway/assurance processes, will support the programme and ensure delivery.
- 7.3. Other risks highlighted in Section 2 will remain under close review by Regeneration Programme Management Office for the duration of the programme including:
- Financial risk: If projects do not deliver the agreed outputs and outcomes as detailed in the investment plan, some costs may not be capitalised and eligible to claim under the grant and must be found within other council budgets, increasing budget pressure across the Council; and
  - Reputational risk: Underdelivering on agreed outputs and outcomes may result in reputational damage leading to loss of confidence of local communities and central government and may result in loss of opportunities to gain further grant funding.

## **8. ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1. This report is consistent with the principles of the Council Plan 2023-2027, Birkenhead 2040 Framework, and draft Local Plan. The Council Plan and Birkenhead 2040 Framework have been informed by consultation with residents, businesses, and key stakeholders.

The Council continues to work closely with the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Board, whose members are appointed to represent local interests and stakeholders, to ensure its involvement in steering the programme forward

and endorsing recommendations where appropriate. At its meeting on 25 February the board voted to endorse the recommendations set out within this report as a whole, with a result of 4 in favour, 3 against and 4 abstaining from the vote.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Whilst there are no direct equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery will continue to be monitored by the Regeneration Programme Management Office (PMO) to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.
- 9.2. An overarching equality impact assessment has also been completed regarding The Local Plan. This report makes no material changes at this stage, the document can be viewed here: [Wirral Local Plan EIA - Feb 2022](#)

## **10. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. Any proposals resulting from this report would be progressed in line with the Council's Climate Change Strategy and would contribute to the aim of Wirral becoming net zero and climate resilient.

## **11. COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. Community Wealth Building reorganises local economies to be fairer and stops wealth flowing out of communities. Striving for a prosperous and inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations, the Council aims to create an economy that benefits all our residents and one which keeps money within Wirral. The Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy is a key part of how this is achieved and makes a major contribution to improving the economic, social and health outcomes of the borough.

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## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Summary report from external review (IMB Management) (Exempt)  
Appendix 2: Full Business case for Transport Museum/Ticket to Ride (Exempt)

**Appendices 1 & 2 were submitted confidentially for commercial reasons and is therefore exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.**

**The appendix files may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact Charlotte Carroll (charlottecarroll@wirral.gov.uk) if you would like this document in an accessible format.**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme Investment plan

Birkenhead Framework 2040

Council Plan 23-27

Wirral Plan (2021-2026)

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in accordance with Section C of its Terms of Reference in, “economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure, enterprise, skills and seeking, securing and managing external funds to achieve that, directly or in partnership with joint ventures and external companies or bodies as well as with the Combined Authority and government bodies”.

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme – Reallocation of unspent funding ODN</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025</b>
<b>Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Programme - Reallocation of Unspent Funding</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> December 2024</b>
<b>RE-ALLOCATION OF TRANSPORT SHED TOWN DEAL GRANT FUNDING</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> July 2024</b>
<b>ACCEPTANCE OF TENDER AND CONTRACT AWARD – BIRKENHEAD TOWN CENTRE MOVEMENT PROJECTS</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>
<b>Policy and Resources Committee – DLUHC Simplification Pilot</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> September 2023</b>
	<b>21<sup>ST</sup> September 2023</b>



**Policy and Resources Committee – BIRKENHEAD,  
WALLASEY AND NEW FERRY SIMPLIFICATION  
PATHFINDER PILOT BOARD**

**27<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**Department for Levelling up, Housing and  
Communities Simplification Pathfinder Pilot  
Investment Plan Officer Decision Notice**

**17<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

**Levelling Up Fund – Officer Decision Notice A**

**8<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

**Town Deal for Birkenhead – Approval of Full  
Business Cases (Tranche 2) Officer Decision Notice**