

WIRRAL COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 15th 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

WIRRAL'S HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2008-11 END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT 2008-09

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) allocated Newheartlands (the Merseyside Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder) a sum of £152 million for Housing Market Renewal funding from its Pathfinder Programme for the years 2008 – 2011. Wirral's indicative share of this allocation is £29.53 million. The allocation to Wirral of HMRI funding for 2008-09 was £10.54million.

2.2 The Newheartlands HMRI Business Plan for the 2008-11 programme was approved by Cabinet on 4th October 2007. This set out the vision for Wirral's HMRI Strategy, specific housing market renewal objectives, priorities for investment and a range of programme scenarios.

2.3 Housing Market Renewal funding for 2008-11 will be complemented by £10,700,000 Regeneration Capital Programme funding, which is considered as match funding to HMRI funds.

2.4 It is anticipated that up to £60 million will be invested in New Build development by the Private Sector, Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords, in the period 2008-11. Over £1.5 million will be invested in the programme from Government Warm Front to further support housing market renewal. This is also recorded as match funding that enhances and adds value to HMRI funding.

2.5 The funding for 2008-11 will allow Wirral to continue its successful HMRI programme. By the end of 2008-09, more than 1080 homes had been acquired, 800 homes had been cleared using HMRI funding and a number of key strategic sites had been acquired. 942 homes have been renovated through the use of grant funding or via the Group Repair Scheme. The "Living Through Change" programme has helped residents to live through large scale change brought about by the Housing Market Renewal programme. It has enabled the maintenance of neighbourhood stability, community safety and environmental standards in areas of intervention. The programme of Housing Market Renewal in Wirral for 2008 - 2011 will complete the clearance programmes in Rock Ferry, Tranmere and Egremont and make a major positive difference to local communities, through the building of new homes on cleared sites. The main focus of the clearance programme for 2008-11 increasingly, will be in North Birkenhead.

3.0 THE HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2008-11

- 3.1 The Housing Market Renewal Programme 2008-11 consists of the following initiatives:
- Birkenhead Phase 1 Clearance
 - Birkenhead Phase 2 Clearance
 - Rock Ferry (Fiveways) Clearance
 - Tranmere (Church Road) Clearance
 - Tranmere (Borough Road) Clearance
 - Wallasey (Woodhall/Royston Avenues)Clearance
 - Strategic site assembly
 - Group Repair Improvements
 - Private Sector Home Improvements
 - Living Through Change
 - Rock Ferry (Sevenoaks) New Build
 - Extra Care Scheme New Build
 - Rock Ferry (Bedford Road) New Build
 - Tranmere (Church Road) New Build
 - Tranmere (Holt Hill) New Build
 - Tranmere (Southwick Road) New Build
 - Wallasey (Woodhall/Royston Avenues)New Build
 - Wallasey (Stringhey Road)New Build
 - Staffing and Resources
- 3.2 The following sections of the report set out the detail of progress on each of the above initiatives, in the period April to March 2009.
- 3.3 The targets for the 2008-11 Programme and the two financial years that make up the programme were agreed by Cabinet, on 9th July 2008.

In summary, the key output targets and performance for the year April 2008– March 2009 are:

	Target Apr 2008- Mar 2009	Actual Performance Apr 2008- Mar 2009
Acquisitions	79	106
Demolitions	111	129
Decent Homes Improvements (inc. Group Repair)	98	133
Group Repair Improvements (non – decent homes standard)	90	28
Energy Efficiency Improvements	515	680
New Build RSL	45	46
New Build Private	14	0

There were only 28 Group Repair non – decent homes because the rest of the Group Repair improvements achieved Decent Home standard. The total number of improvements (161) was less than the total forecast (188) as take up on Equity Loans was slow and less than forecast.

The forecast New Build Private units were Homebuy units which were completed but changed to Rent because of the current economic climate. The scheme at Fox Street, Birkenhead was delayed as the scheme had to be resubmitted to planning.

Further commentary on actual performance against targets is contained in the sections below.

4.0 CLEARANCE

4.1 TRANMERE

A total of 7 units were acquired through agreement, including 3 commercial properties and 4 private homes. Demolition has taken place of 47 properties, 19 on Church Road, 2 in Frodsham Street, 3 in Thompson Street and 12 in Warrington Street. The target figures for the year were 12 acquisitions and 30 demolitions. There are 3 residential properties and 14 commercial units still to be acquired in the Church Road Masterplan and Holt Hill Clearance areas.

4.2 ROCK FERRY (FIVEWAYS)

A total of 8 private properties were acquired through agreement against a target of 11. Demolition of 48 properties has taken place, just over the target of 45 for the year. The remaining 8 acquisitions will be completed later this year when the occupants move into the new build homes on Fiveways. A small strip of land remains to be agreed to complete the whole scheme.

4.3 BIRKENHEAD (PHASE 1)

In the Station Road/Tyrer Street Clearance area, 1 further property acquisition remained to be completed; however this property has been already demolished by Building Control for safety reasons. Demolition has taken place of the other remaining 9 properties on Station Road to provide a cleared site. The New Dock Inn, adjacent to the Station Road/Tyrer Street Statutory Clearance area, was acquired in September 2008 to be demolished in 2009.

4.4 BIRKENHEAD (PHASE 2)

Progress with acquisitions in the Milner/Carrington Streets Clearance area has been rapid with 79 properties acquired in the period April 2008 to March 2009. 2 commercial properties on the opposite side of Laird Street have also been acquired to enable businesses in the Clearance area to relocate to properties to be included in the fourth phase of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme.

4.5 WALLASEY (Woodhall/Royston Avenues)

10 properties have been acquired leaving one remaining commercial property. Negotiations are ongoing with the owner, but consultation with counsel is underway prior to using Compulsory Purchase powers. Demolition has taken place of 22 units. Sale of the site to Cosmopolitan Housing Association was completed in March 2009.

5.0 GROUP REPAIR IMPROVEMENTS

5.1 The Triangles Group Repair scheme comprises the external renovation of 450 properties, mainly private sector owner occupied houses, with grant support, in line with the North Birkenhead Framework for Regeneration. The works include renewal of roofs, fascias, rainwater goods, new windows and doors, repair and redecoration to elevations and boundary walls. The scheme offers a 75% grant with a means tested household contribution of up to 25%.

5.2 Phases 1 and 2 and 3 are now complete. Phase 3 completed in March 2009 with 139 properties completed of which 111 achieved the Decent Home Standard, far in excess of the target of 50.

5.3 Preparatory work has begun on the fourth phase of the Triangles Group Repair scheme and the first phase of the Craven/Paterson Streets Neighbourhood Facelift Scheme.

6.0 PRIVATE SECTOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS

6.1 Funding has been used to enable improvements to 16 properties of sustainable private sector housing stock to Decent Homes Standard in the Church Road area of Tranmere, under the 50/50 grant loan scheme. Four properties, two in Birkenhead and two in Tranmere have been improved to Decent Homes standard as part of the HOUSED scheme run by the Empty Property Team. These give first time buyers or those within clearance areas the opportunity to purchase previously empty homes which have been refurbished at a discount.

A further two properties have been improved to Decent Homes standard after receiving Empty Property Loans.

6.2 There are 9 active enquiries for Equity Renewal Loans in Egremont, in progress.

7.0 LIVING THROUGH CHANGE

7.1 The Living Through Change Programme covers a number of non-physical interventions aimed at maintaining environmental standards, community safety and community cohesion throughout the Housing Market Renewal areas. In addition, the programme covers some environmental improvements. The programme supports the Clearance, New Build and Improvement programmes and reduces the potential negative impact on residents, in the Housing Market Renewal areas.

During the period April 2008 to March 2009 the following activity has taken place:

- Live Wirral Wardens have dealt with 2721 fly tipping incidents, well above the target of 2040 and secured 115 properties to maintain environmental standards and keep the HMRI area clear of fly tipping.
- Live Wirral Wardens have dealt with 1220 requests from residents.
- The HMR Anti – Social Behaviour Officer dealt with 169 active enforcement cases within HMRI area compared with a target of 120. She has engaged with 292 residents in the HMRI area, this does not include complainants or witnesses involved in allocated cases.
- The Homemovers Service has completed 79 cases to assist households affected by clearance, with a further 39 cases ongoing. 9 first time buyers have been assisted into home ownership in the Housing Market Renewal Area, through the First Homes scheme. The scheme provides support and guidance, a financial incentive up to £2,000 towards purchasing and moving costs, referral to an Independent Financial Adviser for mortgage advice and access to other support services.
- The Handyperson Service has carried out basic maintenance works to assist 566 vulnerable people; this is less than the target of 720, largely due to the service being a member of staff short.
- The Landlord Accreditation Scheme has accredited 72 private landlords and 212 properties exceeding the targets of 65 landlords and 130 properties.

7.2 This programme of initiatives continues to be well received by the local community.

8.0 NEW BUILD

8.1 8 properties for rent on the site of the old "Pilot" public house, in Beckwith Street, Birkenhead, bought by Cosmopolitan and 7 properties for rent at Bentinck Street, Birkenhead, developed by Regenda have been completed.

8.2 A scheme to build 14 houses for rent at Fox Street, Birkenhead started on site at the end of March 2009 and is scheduled for completion in June 2010.

- 8.3 Lovell is now building on site at Sevenoaks, Rock Ferry (cleared site at Fiveways) and the official launch took place on September 19th 2008. The first homes will be ready in Summer 2009.
- 8.4 The scheme on the cleared site of 33 -51 Bedford Road, Rock Ferry to be developed by Wirral Methodist Housing Association, will consist of 4 four bedroom houses, 2 three bedroom houses and 2 two bedroom flats all built to lifetime homes standard. Start on site was at the end of September 2008 and is scheduled for completion in August 2009.
- 8.5 15 RSL properties on the Holt Road development in Tranmere were completed in June 2008.
- 8.6 The Venture Housing scheme at Leighton Road, Tranmere consisting of 16 houses and bungalows completed in February 2009.
- 8.7 The development agreement with Lovell, the Council's selected private sector developer for the Church Road area in Tranmere, was completed in April 2009. The first phase of the development will comprise a retail centre of 8 units on the former Abakhan site, subject to detailed planning consent. The housing element of the development programme will be held in abeyance for a short period due to the "credit crunch" and general downturn in the housing market.
- 8.8 The Southwick Road new build scheme on the former "Saunders" site on Old Chester Road, Tranmere started on site in February 2009. This is a Maritime Housing scheme and comprises 21 two bedroom apartments for rent and will complete in early 2010.
- 8.9 Maritime Housing are also building 2 two bedroom bungalows for rent, on the cleared site of 28-34 Aspendale Road, Tranmere. These are scheduled for completion in early 2010.
- 8.10 The scheme at Holt Hill, Tranmere, to be developed by Maritime Housing, will form part of the 2010-11 programme.
- 8.11 The Extra Care scheme being developed by Housing 21 to provide housing for older people with extra care needs will be built on the site of the former Somerville Primary School, in Wallasey. Demolition has been completed enabling a start on site in March 2009.
- 8.12 The schemes at Stringhey Road (Venture Housing) and Woodhall/Royston Avenues (Cosmopolitan Housing), Wallasey are on site and completions will be reported as part of the 2009-10 and 2010 -11 programmes.

9.0 **MARKETING & PUBLICITY**

- 9.1 Since April 2008, Marketing & Communication focus has been on "Live Wirral Love Wirral", a high profile, intensive marketing campaign promoting eastern Wirral as an exciting, vibrant place to live, work and play. The strategy ensured that key messages were communicated to all stakeholders and residents through a consistent strong flexible brand that is lifestyle driven and promotes the key attributes of Wirral as an area in which to live. Campaigns have included the use of a mix of communication channels such as signage, events, outdoor advertising, radio advertising and newsletters, supported by a range of marketing collateral.

9.2 In addition to campaign led activity, promotion of HMR funded services has been a priority and consequent sub brands created to fit in with the Live Wirral brand family. This has strengthened the brand and provided clarity around the products and services, HMR delivers. The launch of the Live Wirral website has provided another vehicle for communications to stakeholders and the community, enabling up to date information to be available at all times.

9.3 Other activity included:

- HMRI Regeneration Day with Prenton High School pupils
- HMRI Regeneration Day with Wallasey School pupils
- Royston/Woodall Avenue Consultation Event
- Tranmere Show
- Fiveways Start on Site Event attended by Frank Field MP
- Sponsorship of Park High Students “Hooked on Fishing” Project
- Attendance at SafeSpace Event, Central Park, Wallasey
- Attendance at NEEC 2009 (North of England Education Conference)
- Knowles Street Open Day
- Live Wirral Community Awards 2008
- Live Wirral Wardens Catwalk

9.4 Press Releases issued:

- Brick by brick: A new future is laid for Wirral Fiveways
- Tenants queuing up to rent accredited properties
- Rain doesn’t dampen Wallasey’s Parklife
- Hooked on Fishing
- Lovell Developer Agreement
- HMR Funding Announcement
- Empty Property Team
- Landlord Accreditation Team

10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The table below shows the target and actual funding used in the period April 2008– Mar 2009.

Funding Source	Target Apr 2008– Mar 2009	Actual Apr 2008– Mar 2009
	£	£
HMRI	£10,510,000	£10,540,000
Match Funding:		
Regeneration Capital	£3,577,000	£4,797,995
Capital receipts	£353,750	£457,726
Warm Front (Government)	£600,000	£603,000
North West Climate Fund	£0	£27,500
Total Match Funding	£4,530,750	£5,886,221
TOTAL	£15,040,750	£16,426,221

11.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

12.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme will have a positive impact on some of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Wirral.

13.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 HMRI will result in some clearance of poorly designed, unsafe or obsolescent areas and the creation of safer, more secure living environments.

14.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Housing Market Renewal will improve the quality of living environments and environmental standards throughout many parts of Wirral. New high quality, decent homes with enhanced energy efficiency standards and better use of renewable building materials will contribute towards Sustainable Development and Climate Change priorities.

15.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

15.1 HMRI aims to bring about a fundamental change in the character of some of the most deprived areas of the Borough. Proposals for new development will be brought forward with the assistance of the preferred private developer and Registered Social Landlords and will be integrated with the Council's Local Development Framework, as either Supplementary Planning Documents or Development Plan Documents. Residential redevelopment should be in conformity with Policy HS4 of the Unitary Development Plan, whilst mixed use development incorporating retail use will be considered against retail policy including Policy SH4 of the Unitary Development Plan. Other uses will be considered against UDP Policy HS15.

16.0 ANTI – POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

16.1 None arising from this report.

17.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

17.1 None arising from this report.

18.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

18.1 The HMRI areas are within the following Wards: Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere; Rock Ferry, Seacombe; Liscard, Cloughton, Oxtan and Bromborough.

19.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

19.1 There will be Human Rights implications under Article 8 and Article 1 of the first protocol, both of which concern the protection of private property. Article 8 of the convention on Human Rights requires a Local Authority to respect a person's home. A Local Authority may only affect a person's right to respect for his home if it is necessary, e.g. in the interests of economic wellbeing, for the prevention of crime or the protection of health.

Having access to a decent home is a basic human right to which HMRI contributes significantly.

20.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

20.1 North Birkenhead Framework for Regeneration, Tranmere (Church Road) Masterplan, Rock Ferry (Fiveways) Masterplan, Strategy for Inner Wirral 2004-14, Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme 2008-11.

21.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

21.1 Members note the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral in the period April 2008 to Mar 2009.

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