



Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee

5th March 2024

REPORT TITLE:	PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks agreement from the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee to progress utilisation of Wirral’s Public Health Grant Reserves.

The Director of Public Health has set out proposals to utilise the ringfenced funding over the course of a three-year period, between April 2024 and March 2027, up to a maximum value of £4,500,000.

An agreed level of reserve will be retained, in line with wider best practice, to ensure support for any in-year pressures and new interventions. The reserve will mitigate the impact from late annual notification of the Public Health Grant allocation, and any potential in year reductions that may be applied nationally.

The report sets out an overview of the three-year spending plan and the thematic areas of focus, following a detailed update provided at a briefing with the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee Members in January 2024. The initial spending proposals have been developed in collaboration, following a comprehensive review of the use of the Public Health Grant, led by the Director of Public Health during 2023.

This decision supports the implementation of Wirral Council’s Working Together Plan 2023-2027 and its core purpose to work together to promote fairness and opportunity for people and communities in Wirral. Public Health Grant spending supports the implementation of Wirral’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027.

The proposed actions affect all wards within the borough and is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is recommended to authorise the Director of Public Health to make effective use of the Public Health Grant Reserves to tackle the identified emerging pressures, in line with the spending proposals, over a three-year period from April 2024 to March 2027, up to a maximum value of £4,500,000.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To enable the effective utilisation of Wirral's Public Health Grant Reserve, to implement local public health measures and interventions, to help address areas of identified unmet need.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Public Health Grant conditions allow for the carrying forward of any unspent funding into the next financial year, as part of a ringfenced Public Health reserve, however the Department for Health and Social Care reserve the right to reduce the Public Health Grant if excessive reserves are maintained. Not developing a spending plan for the use of the current Public Health Reserve presents a risk to the Council of a reduction to future funding allocations.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Public Health Grant Criteria

- 3.1 Under the National Health Service Act 2006, local authorities were given responsibilities for public health functions, namely 'each local authority must take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area'. Alongside this duty, a ring-fenced grant was provided where the 'main and primary purpose of all spend from the grant is public health'. The Director of Public Health and Chief Executive/S151 Officer have to confirm that expenditure of the Public Health Grant is in line with the grant criteria. Wirral Council is required to ensure provision of services in line with the terms of the Grant, as summarised in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 It remains essential that funds, including Public Health Reserves are only spent on activities whose main or primary purpose is to improve the public health of local populations and local authorities must have regard to other guidance as required by the Secretary of State, including Public Health Outcomes Framework and Best Value. The terms of the grant outlines prescribed (those services mandated in the NHS Act 2006) and non-prescribed services, which are required as part of the conditions of the grant.
- 3.3 Any breach in the terms or conditions of the Grant, such as the Director of Public Health or S151 Officer being unable to confirm that spend fairly presents the eligible expenditure, may mean that the Secretary of State may reduce, suspend, or withhold grant payments or require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant monies paid.

Review of Wirral's Public Health Grant Usage

- 3.4 To ensure that the local authority has completed its duties with regard to the use of the Grant, a comprehensive review led by the Director of Public Health was conducted in 2023. Review preparations commenced in Spring 2023, and over the course of several months, across two phases, a total of forty-four commissioned services and

public health interventions were assessed. The Grant Review included input from key partners and stakeholders, including other parts of the local authority, NHS and Community, Voluntary and Faith sector. A structured criteria supported the analysis of the Grant use, considering:

- Public Health foundation: rationale, strategic fit, local need, and evidence base
- Service quality: Strength of service design, service performance and impact
- Value: Economic assessment (value for money), social value
- Scope for developments: commissioning arrangements, potential for improvement, alternative options, investment options and impacts
- Current Public Health resource requirements

3.5 The undertaking of this series of strategic reviews gave assurance around existing use of the Grant for public health commissioning and provides a strong platform to ensuring current and future commissions and services continue to be evidence based and designed to meet the needs of Wirral residents. The review recommendations and planned actions were shared with Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee Members by the Director of Public Health, during a workshop on 25th January 2024.

Wirral Council Public Health Grant Allocation 2024/25

3.6 Notification of the Public Health Grant allocations are often very late in the financial year (usually February/March) and this can have implications for effective financial planning. Wirral Council's Public Health Grant Allocation for 2024/25 was confirmed on 9th February 2024, totalling £32,596,474. This was an increase of 1.3% on the previous year, plus additional funding to contribute towards costs in relation to nationally agreed uplifts for NHS Agenda for Change pay, relating to the Public Health commissioned services.

Wirral Council Public Health Reserves

3.7 Wirral's Public Health Grant Reserve is currently £6,900,000 which has accumulated over the course of a number of years. This was particularly so during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Council was allocated significant additional time limited one-off funding, through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, and the focus was on the effective response and mitigation of the impact of the pandemic for local residents and communities.

3.8 Building on from the Public Health Grant Review recommendations, areas were identified requiring investment, which meet the criteria of the Public Health Grant, demonstrate a public health rationale, informed by local intelligence and insight, provide value for money, and link to the strategic priorities as set out in Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2027. The Director of Public Health has set out initial plans to utilise the Public Health reserves, across the following thematic areas, during a three-year period:

Thematic Area	Indicative Spend April 2024 - March 2027 (£)
Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector	1,070,000
Housing & Health	930,000
Falls Prevention	700,000

Nationally agreed NHS uplift (Agenda for Change shortfall)	670,000
Fuel Poverty	600,000
Environmental Services / Climate Emergency	200,000
Positive Inclusion Programme	120,000
Tobacco Control	120,000
Speech & Language / Enhanced Parenting Support	90,000
TOTAL	4,500,000

- 3.9 The Director of Public Health and the Section 151 Officer agree to sustain a suitable level of Public Health Reserve, in line with best practice, to ensure support for any in-year pressures and new interventions. The reserve will also mitigate the impact from late annual notification of the Public Health Grant allocation, and any potential in year reductions made nationally.
- 3.10 The Director of Public Health has provided an update to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) on the plans to use the Public Health reserves, and OHID have responded positively to the proposals and the processes that have been outlined within this report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report proposes the utilisation of the Public Health Grant Reserves, up to a value of £4,500,000 over three years. Grant reserves are subject to the same ringfenced criteria as the Grant allocations. Should future Public Health Grant allocations be reduced, then reviews of commissioning and other expenditure, including reserve spend, will be undertaken and amounts may need to be varied.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Under the National Health Service Act 2006, local authorities were given responsibilities for public health functions, delivered through the ringfenced Public Health Grant. Grant criteria sets out that spend must be aligned to areas where the 'main and primary purpose of all spend is public health'.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Spending of the Public Health Grant reserve will be co-ordinated and overseen by existing public health officers. Spending proposals include additional resource investment for Council services, on a time limited basis.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There is a risk that future funding levels could be reduced as a result of reserves which have built up. This decision mitigates that risk, proposing suitable use of the reserves to meet local need.

7.2 Given the expenditure is derived from the Public Health reserves, the investment is not long term and is likely to come to an end at the point of agreed conclusion for each of the interventions. Sustainability beyond the next three years will be an ongoing factor in the monitoring of all areas of spend.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 In order to develop the reserve spending proposals, Public Health have engaged with key partners and stakeholders, including the Elected Members of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee. Proposals are evidenced based and have been developed using local intelligence and insight.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications from this report. Any actions from the use of the Grant Reserve may need an Equality Impact Assessment, which will be done in the inception stage of any proposal.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 As part of this decision, a thematic area of spend is to invest in Council resources to support the climate emergency agenda. Further consideration to the environmental and climate implications for individual public health interventions will be given as those plans develop.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

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. This decision supports several of the key outcomes within the strategy.

REPORT AUTHOR: Dave Bradburn

Director of Public Health

Email: davebradburn@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Public Health Duty in Local Authorities

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Public health ring-fenced grant financial year 2024 to 2025: local authority circular:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-grants-to-local-authorities-2024-to-2025/public-health-ring-fenced-grant-financial-year-2024-to-2025-local-authority-circular>

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee in accordance with Section 2.2(c) of its Terms of Reference:

all Public Health functions (in co-ordination with those functions reserved to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's statutory health functions)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	13 th February 2024