Public Document Pack

Council

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council to be held at **6.00 p.m. on Monday, 12 October 2026** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey, to take into consideration and determine the following subjects:

Contact Officer: Anna Perrett
Tel: 0151 691 8564
e-mail: annaperret@wirral.gov.uk
Website: http://www.wirral.gov.uk

PLEASE NOTE: Public seating is limited therefore members of the public wishing to attend are asked to register their attendance in advance by emailing committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk.

Wirral Council is fully committed to equalities and our obligations under The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. If you have any adjustments that would help you attend or participate at this meeting, please let us know as soon as possible and we would be happy to facilitate where possible. Please contact committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk

This meeting will be webcast at
https://wirral.public-i.tv/core/portal/home

AGENDA

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Council are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest, in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

2. CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive the Civic Mayor's announcements and any apologies for absence.

3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 20)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council

held on 20th July 2026.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

To deal with questions, statements and petitions from members of the public, and Members, in accordance with Standing Orders 10, 11 and 12.

A. Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Wednesday 7th October 2026 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (via the online form here: **Public Question Form**) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

For more information on how your personal information will be used, please see this link: Document Data Protection Protocol

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question by the deadline for submission.

B. Statements and Petitions

Notice of representations (statements) to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Wednesday 7th October 2026 to the Council's Monitoring Officer.

To register your intention to give a statement please do so via this link: Public Statement Notification, and will be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

Petitions may be presented to the Council if provided to Democratic and Member Services no later than 3 working days before the meeting, at the discretion of the Mayor. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding three minutes) to outline the aims of the petition. The Mayor will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. If a petition contains more than 5,000 signatures, it will be debated at a subsequent meeting of Council for up to 15 minutes, at the discretion of the Mayor. Please give notice of petitions to committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your statement/petition by the deadline for submission.

C. Members' Questions

To consider Members' questions to the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, Committee Chair or a Leader of a Political Group, in accordance with Standing Orders 12.

5. MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

To consider any recommendations and receive reports from the Council's Committees which require the approval or consideration of the Council, and to comment on any of those reports.

A. New Wirral Plan (Pages 21 - 90)

Council is requested to consider the following recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 22 July 2026:

Council is recommended to approve the new Wirral Plan for 2027 to 2031.

Minute extract and report attached.

B. Capital Monitoring Quarter 1 (2026/27) (Pages 91 - 126)

Council is requested to consider the following recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 22 July 2026:

Council are recommended to approve:

1. the revised Capital Programme of £122.920 million for 2026/27.

2. additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.8 of the report.

Minute extract and report attached.

C. Pay Policy 2027 – 2028 (Pages 127 - 144)

Council is requested to consider the following recommendation of the Senior Officer and Staffing Sub-Committee held on 29 September 2026:

Council is recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2027-2028.

Minute extract and report attached.

D. Youth Justice Service Annual Plan (Pages 145 - 220)

Council is requested to consider the following recommendation of the Children, Young People and Education Committee held on 21 September 2026:

Council is recommended to approve the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27.

Minute extract and report attached.

E. Member/Officer Protocol (Pages 221 - 240)

Council is requested to consider the following recommendation of the Constitution and Standards Committee held on 24 September 2026:

Council is recommended to approve the revisions to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations

Minute extract and report attached.

F. Revisions to the Constitution (Pages 241 - 386)

Council is requested to consider the following recommendation of the Constitution and Standards Committee held on 24 September 2026:

Council is recommended to approve the proposed amendments to the Constitution, as detailed in sections 3.2 – 3.16 of the report.

Minute extract and report attached.

G. Appointment of Independent Member ARMC (Pages 387 - 392)

Council is requested to approve the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

6. REPORTS AND DECISIONS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

To receive reports about and receive questions and answers on decisions made by Committees since the last meeting of Council.

A. DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The following decisions were excluded from removal of delegation and are therefore reported to Council in accordance with Part 4, Section 4, paragraph 6(a)(ii) of the Constitution.

Decision - Get Britain Working: Connect to Work | Wirral

Council
Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer
18 August 2026

Decision - Home to School and Adult Day Centre Transport Contracts | Wirral Council
Interim Director of Children Family and Education
24 August 2026

The minutes of all committees which have met since the 6th July, up until 25th September 2026 are attached below.

Minutes marked (draft) are subject to formal committee approval:

- 8.07.2026 Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee
- 14.07.2026 Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee
- 15.07.2026 Children Young People and Education Committee
- 16.07.2026 Planning Committee
- 20.07.2026 Health and Wellbeing Board
- 21.07.2026 Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee
- 22.07.2026 Policy and Resources Committee
- 13.08.2026 Planning Committee
- 09.09.2026 Policy and Resources Committee (draft)
- 10.09.2026 Planning Committee
- 14.09.2026 Economy Regeneration & Housing Committee (draft)
- 15.09.2026 Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee (draft)
- 16.09.2026 Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee (draft)
- 17.09.2026 Health and Wellbeing Board (draft)
- 21.09.2026 Children Young People and Education Committee (draft)
- 22.09.2026 Pensions Committee
- 23.09.2026 Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure (draft)
- 24.09.2026 Constitution and Standards (draft)

B. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

To receive questions and answers to representatives on Joint Authorities on matters which fall within the responsibility of the relevant Joint Authority, to be received in accordance with Standing Order 12.4.

7. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (Pages 539 - 546)

Motions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.1, are attached. They are listed in accordance with Standing Order 13.2, and the full text of each motion is attached.

Full Council Responsibility for Functions

The full responsibility of functions for Full Council can be found at the end of this agenda.

Jason Gooding, Director of Corporate Services

TIMINGS AND GUILLOTINE

Members are reminded of the following:

Item 2 - under Standing Order 2(iv) Mayor's announcements normally limited to up to 5 minutes.

Item 4A. – under Standing Order 10.7, public questions, up to 2 minutes allowed to put a question and up to 2 minutes for a response. Up to 30 minutes in total allowed for public questions (Standing Order 2(v)).

Item 4B. - under Standing Order 11.1, representations (statements) up to 3 minutes, with public speaking on any one item not exceeding 10 minutes. Up to 20 minutes in total allowed to receive representations (Standing Order 2(vi). Petitions – under Standing Order 11.2, present and speak to a petition for up to 1 minute.

Item 4C. – under Standing Order 12.8, questions on notice from Members will not exceed 1 minute and up to 2 minutes for a response.

Item 6 – under Standing Order 2(xii) the total time allowed for questions and answers on decisions of committees is up to 45 minute.

Under Standing Order 9 of the Council Procedure Rules:

The Mayor will adjourn the meeting for a period of ten minutes at a convenient time after one and a half hours.

Where three hours have elapsed after the commencement of any meeting (and in the case of an extraordinary meeting of Council when two hours have elapsed since commencement of the meeting) the Mayor shall interrupt the meeting and the Member speaking must immediately cease doing so and sit down. The meeting shall then dispose of the item then under consideration as if the motion *'That the question be now put'* had been carried (i.e. the debate shall be concluded by the seconder and by the Member who has the right of reply and the vote will then be taken without any further discussion). This rule will not apply to meetings of a quasi-judicial or regulatory nature.

Audio/Visual Recording of Meetings

Everyone is welcome to record meetings of the Council and its Committees using non-disruptive methods. For particular meetings we may identify a 'designated area' for you to record from. If you have any questions about this please contact Committee and Civic Services (members of the press please contact the Press Office). Please note that the Chair of the meeting has the discretion to halt any recording for a number of reasons, including disruption caused by the filming or the nature of the business being conducted.

Persons making recordings are requested not to put undue restrictions on the material produced so that it can be reused and edited by all local people and organisations on a non-commercial basis.

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COUNCIL

Monday, 20 July 2026

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Mary Jordan) in the Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor Mike Sullivan)

Councillors

KJ Williams
A Ainsworth
C Baldwin
P Basnett
G Bennett
S Bennett
J Bird
M Booth
A Brame
H Cameron
C Carubia
P Cleary
C Cooke
Cooper
T Cox
A Davies
GJ Davies
G Davies
S Foulkes
A Gardner
P Gilchrist
H Gorman
N Graham
JE Green
EA Grey
J Grier
B Hall
A Hodson
K Hodson
P Jobson
G Jenkinson
J Johnson
T Jones
S Kelly
B Kenny
J Stewart Laing
T Laing
E Lamb
L Luxon-Kewley
P Martin
G McManus
J McManus
R Molyneux
S Mountney
K Murphy
T Murphy
C Povall
S Powell-Wilde
H Raymond
L Rennie
M Redfern
M Skillicorn
K Stuart
P Stuart
E Tomeny
C Walsh-McDonald
J Walsh-McDonald
J Williamson
V Wilson
G Wood

Apologies — Councillors: I Lewis, A Onwuemene, J Robinson

8 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Civic Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting, as well as those watching the webcast.

She then asked Members to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at the meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Paula Basnett declared a pecuniary interest in Item 4a in relation to the public question submitted regarding Pacific Road Studios, advising that she held a contract with the Wirral Chamber.

9 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Lewis, Onwuemene and Robinson.

The Civic Mayor informed the Council of the death of former Councillor and Honorary Alderwoman Moira McLaughlin, who had been Civic Mayor in 2011-12, had represented the Rock Ferry ward between 1996 and 2022, and had served as a Cabinet Member, holding several portfolios.

Tributes were paid by the Civic Mayor, alongside Councillors Foulkes, Simon Mountney, Cleary, Gilchrist and Andrew Hodson, on behalf of their respective political groups. Members reflected on Moira McLaughlin's long record of public service, commitment to social care, nursing career, community work and dedication to residents.

The Council then observed a minute's silence in her memory.

The Civic Mayor congratulated Councillor Cherry Povall on being awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours.

The Civic Mayor further reported that she had undertaken 57 engagements to date since taking office. This included judging a science competition, meeting young entrepreneurs participating in the SPARK programme, and presenting certificates to adult learners. The Civic Mayor updated on her Civic Service held on 12 July 2026, thanking the Civic Team and the 7th Bebington Holy Trinity Scouts for their support. Members were advised that her nominated charities for the municipal year are the Wirral Carers Alliance and the Paul Lavelle Foundation, and a fundraising initiative involving "Mayor Bear" had been launched.

10 **MINUTES**

The Civic Mayor asked Members to approve the minutes of the Council meetings held on 13 May 2026 and 20 May 2026.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 13 May 2026 and 20 May 2026 be approved as a correct record.

11 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

11.1 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Civic Mayor reported that four public questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

Further to her declaration of interest, Councillor Basnett left the Chamber during consideration of the first public question. The question was therefore referred to the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee.

Sam Jelenski asked the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee how the Council would ensure that any savings arising from the lower-cost New Ferry Public Realm option remained available for New Ferry rather than being reallocated elsewhere.

Councillor Skillicorn responded that the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee had approved Pacific Road Studios and Duke Street as projects to utilise any underspends within the Local Regeneration Fund programme. He confirmed that the original £3.2m Future High Streets Fund allocation for New Ferry remained unaffected.

In response to a supplementary question concerning delivery access restrictions for precinct businesses, Councillor Skillicorn advised that a written response would be provided.

Pauline Power asked the Leader of the Council how residents could have confidence in the Council's democratic processes when consultation responses indicated that 83% of respondents had supported Option 1 of the New Ferry Public Realm proposals.

Councillor Basnett advised that consultation feedback had been considered alongside professional advice, affordability, deliverability, value for money and long-term sustainability considerations. Following consideration of all relevant factors, the Committee had determined that Option 2 represented the most deliverable and financially sustainable scheme.

In response to a supplementary question regarding democratic accountability, Councillor Basnett reiterated that consultation feedback had been fully considered alongside the Council's wider responsibilities.

Claire Shields asked the Leader of the Council how the Butterfly Trail and other community-requested features would be delivered within the final New Ferry Public Realm Scheme and how confidence in future consultations would be improved.

Councillor Basnett advised that the Butterfly Trail was being considered as part of the social value elements of the approved design. She stated that consultation feedback had been fully considered alongside statutory, financial and operational requirements.

In response to a supplementary question asking whether the Butterfly Trail would be included in the final scheme, Councillor Basnett advised that officers were exploring options for incorporating it within the approved design and proposed regular meetings with traders and stakeholders during the development of the scheme.

Tony Norbury asked the Leader of the Council how the Butterfly Trail and associated heritage features could be incorporated within the approved New Ferry Public Realm scheme.

Councillor Paula Basnett advised that the reintroduction of the Butterfly Trail was being considered as part of the detailed development of Option 2, including through potential social value commitments.

In response to a supplementary question regarding whether features contained within Option 1, including the Butterfly Trail, higher quality paving and New Ferry heritage and storytelling elements, could be incorporated into the approved scheme, Councillor Basnett advised that the Council could not depart from the Committee's decision to proceed with Option 2. However, she confirmed that traders and stakeholders would have opportunities to contribute to the detailed design process through proposed ongoing engagement arrangements.

11.2 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Civic Mayor reported that 3 requests to make statements had been received.

Christopher Lee Power made a statement regarding agenda item 5b – Capital Outturn 2025/26 – regarding the New Ferry regeneration project, expressing concerns arising from the decision-making process associated with the approved public realm scheme. He expressed concern that councillors had not been provided with a detailed breakdown of costs for each regeneration option and suggested that all options had not been given equal consideration.

Mark Anthony Craig made a statement regarding agenda item 5b – Capital Outturn 2025/26 – concerning New Ferry regeneration and previous consultation exercises undertaken by the Council. Mr Craig referred to concerns regarding the closure and redevelopment of Woodhead Street car park, the impact upon local businesses and footfall, and the decision to progress the approved Public Realm option despite overwhelming support for Option 1 within the public consultation.

Hilary Hart, Director of Clean Mersey, made a statement in respect of Agenda Item 7.2 (Green Group Motion on Notice), regarding water quality monitoring within the River Birket catchment. She highlighted evidence of pollution arising from drainage misconnections and elevated ammonia and phosphate levels within local watercourses, and called for improved partnership working and effective and enforcement arrangements to ensure identified sources of pollution were resolved.

The Civic Mayor reported that 1 petition had been submitted.

Councillor Julie McManus presented a petition containing 1,852 verified signatures from Wirral residents requesting improved facilities for Birkenhead Dog Kennels. In presenting the petition, Councillor McManus highlighted the work undertaken by volunteers and the Friends of Birkenhead Kennels charity in caring for and rehoming stray and abandoned dogs and called for improved accommodation and facilities to support their work.

11.3 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Civic Mayor reported that 8 Member questions had been submitted.

Councillor Gilchrist asked the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee what action was being taken to address delays to the weed spraying programme and the subsequent removal of weed debris.

Councillor Booth advised that the spraying programme had been delayed due to equipment faults but that these issues had now been resolved. He confirmed that all wards were expected to receive treatment by the end of July, with a second treatment programme to follow. Dead weeds would be removed through normal street cleansing operations and future arrangements would be improved through the new integrated waste and street cleansing contract.

Councillor Brame asked the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee about issues relating to food waste collection arrangements for flats and apartment blocks and the provision of communal bins.

Councillor Booth advised that communal food waste containers were being delivered to suitable properties and that officers were working with residents to identify the most appropriate arrangements. He confirmed that lessons learned from the first phase of the rollout would inform future phases.

Councillor Gail Jenkinson asked the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee whether he had watched the National Emergency Briefing on the climate and nature crisis produced by Oxford University and whether he would facilitate its circulation to all councillors.

Councillor Booth advised that it was for individual councillors to determine what resources they wished to use in undertaking their duties and suggested that Members interested in the briefing could obtain it directly from Councillor Jenkinson.

Councillor Cleary asked the Chair of the Planning Committee about the use of lawful development certificates for smaller HMOs and whether this represented a loophole in planning policy.

Councillor Kelly advised that this did not constitute a loophole and that larger HMOs requiring planning permission continued to be assessed against Local Plan Policy WD7. He further updated Council on progress towards introducing an Article 4 Direction to strengthen planning controls over smaller HMOs.

Councillor Cleary asked the Chair of the Planning Committee how much Biodiversity Net Gain funding arising from two recent planning approvals would be spent within Wirral.

Councillor Kelly advised that none of the funding would currently be retained within the borough as the Council had not yet established a habitat bank to receive such investment. He noted that work remained ongoing to develop a local habitat bank.

Councillor Lamb asked the Leader of the Council what lessons had been learnt from recent extreme heat events and wildfire incidents, and whether improvements would be made to public communications, air quality alerts, support for vulnerable residents, access to cooling spaces, and the development of heatwave and wildfire preparedness plans.

Councillor Basnett advised that a new climate resilience post was being established and that work was underway to develop summer health resilience and adverse weather plans. She also outlined that the Council currently issued public health messages through Wirral View, social media, Council briefings and its website, and advised of existing arrangements with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to manage wildfire risks. She confirmed that these arrangements would continue to be reviewed.

Councillor Molyneux asked the Leader of the Council how many residents had been supported through the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Councillor Basnett advised that, between April and June 2026, 1,732 applications or referrals had been received, resulting in 752 awards of support with a total value of £140,181. Additional fuel bank and out-of-hours assistance had also been provided.

Councillor Jenkinson asked the Leader of the Council about the low success rate of Council Tax Hardship Fund applications and the support available to unsuccessful applicants.

Councillor Basnett advised that each application was assessed individually in accordance with the Council's approved policy and that the most common reason for refusal was the availability of sufficient disposable income. She confirmed that unsuccessful applicants could request a review and were signposted to alternative support schemes, including the Crisis and Resilience Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments.

12 MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

The Civic Mayor advised that there were 5 matters requiring approval by the Council.

12.1 REVISION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

The first matter for approval was proposed revisions to committee places among political groups, following receipt of notice to the proper officer from Councillor Tony Jones MBE that he had resigned from the Labour Group.

On a motion by Councillor Basnett, seconded by Councillor McManus, it was:

That Council:

1. **the revised proportionality in the political composition of membership of ordinary committees of the Council as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be agreed; and**

2. **Councillor Tony Jones be appointed to sit on the:**

   Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee; and
   Audit and Risk Management Committee.

12.2 2025-26 CAPITAL OUTTURN

The second matter requiring approval was to consider the recommendations of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 June 2026.

Councillor Paula Basnett proposing the recommendations, highlighted the Council's improved financial position, reduced reliance on borrowing and continued investment in regeneration and infrastructure projects. During the discussion, concerns were expressed regarding the New Ferry regeneration scheme, consultation outcomes and the proposed use of Local Regeneration Fund underspend. Members further noted the importance of ensuring that future capital programmes remained affordable, deliverable and aligned to the Council's priorities.

On a motion by Councillor Paula Basnett, Seconded by Councillor Julie McManus, it was

Resolved – That

1. **the virements of budget referred to in Appendix F of the report be approved; and**

2. **the bids in Appendix G of the report be approved.**

12.3 **REVISIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The third matter requiring approval was the recommendations from the Constitution and Standards Committee of 23 June 2026 on revisions to the Constitution in respect of the Freedom of the Borough protocol, and other minor amendments.

In proposing and seconding the recommendations, Councillors Cox and Gilchrist welcomed the proposed amendments, particularly the clarification of processes relating to honorary distinctions and civic recognition.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, Seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was:

Resolved – That the amendments to the Constitution, as detailed in sections 3.2 to 3.7 of the report, be approved.

12.4 **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS**

The fourth matter requiring approval by Council was the recommendations of the Constitution and Standards Committee held on 23 June 2026 in respect of the appointment of independent persons.

In proposing and seconding the recommendations, welcomed the contribution made by Independent Persons in maintaining public confidence in the

Council's ethical governance arrangements and thanked those willing to continue serving in the role.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, Seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was

Resolved – That the appointment of the following Independent Persons of the Constitution and Standards Committee be approved for a period of two years:

Professor RS Jones
Mr J McCosh
Mr P Barton
Ms C Fraser
Mr J Rowe

12.5 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The fifth matter for consideration was the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee following referral from its meeting held on 24th June 2026.

The annual report outlined the Committee's work in overseeing governance, risk management, internal control and external audit arrangements during the municipal year. Members noted the Committee's continuing work to strengthen the Council's assurance and risk management framework.

On a motion by Councillor Brenda Hall, Seconded by Councillor Helen Cameron, it was:

Resolved – That the ARMC Annual Report for 2025-26 be approved.

13 REPORTS AND DECISIONS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

13.1 DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The Civic Mayor reported the decisions taken which were excluded from removal of delegation and were therefore reported to Council in accordance with Part 4, Section 4, paragraph 6(a)(ii) of the Constitution.

The Civic Mayor invited members to ask questions in relation to the minutes of Committee meetings held since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Mountney asked a question in respect of Minute 11 (Revenue Monitoring Report) of the Policy and Resources Committee on 10th June

2026. Councillor Mountney asked the Leader of the Council to reconcile statements regarding the stabilisation of the Council's finances with the reported revenue variances and budget shortfall.

Councillor Basnett advised that the Council had stabilised its finances and avoided borrowing previously identified exceptional financial support funding. She acknowledged the continuing budget challenges facing the authority, including a projected budget gap in future years, and emphasised the need for service transformation and changes to operating models in order to maintain financial sustainability whilst continuing to protect services for vulnerable children and adults.

13.2 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Councillor Jenkinson asked Councillor Basnett, in her capacity as Liverpool City Region Cabinet Member for Energy and Environment, whether she agreed that the National Emergency Briefing on the Climate and Nature Crisis should be viewed by councillors and whether arrangements could be made for it to be circulated.

Councillor Paula Basnett advised that she had viewed the briefing and acknowledged its importance. She noted that Councillor Booth had previously responded on the matter and indicated that members wishing to access the briefing could obtain it through Councillor Jenkinson. Councillor Basnett further informed the Council that she was no longer the Cabinet Member for Energy and Environment, having recently been appointed Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Regeneration.

14 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Civic Mayor reported that 4 motions on Notice had been received.

14.1 PROTECTING WIRRAL'S GREEN BELT AND SECURING FAIR HOUSING TARGETS

Councillor Mark Skillicorn moved and Councillor Paula Basnett seconded a motion submitted in accordance with standing order 13.

Councillor Skillicorn advised that amendments submitted in accordance with standing order 13.3 by the Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group had been accepted as friendly.

Following a debate, the motion as amended was then put to the vote and was

Resolved (unanimously) – That

Council notes that:

- **England faces a deep and worsening housing crisis, with too few genuinely affordable homes, rising rents and home ownership increasingly out of reach for many working people and young families in Wirral.**
- **This crisis has developed over decades through the loss of social housing, the failure to replace homes sold through Right to Buy, and the long-term failure of successive governments to build enough of the right homes in the right places.**
- **The Labour Government's revised Standard Method for assessing housing need has increased Wirral's annual housing requirement from approximately 800 homes to around 1,622 homes per year in the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework.**
- **Wirral faces significant challenges which must be properly reflected in any assessment of housing need, including its peninsula geography, extensive environmental designations, the viability of brownfield development, pressures on public services, the need to regenerate the borough and the importance of protecting the borough's Green Belt and unique character.**
- **Liverpool City Region has identified 310 sites capable of yielding 64,000 homes, and that a mayoral development corporation is to be established at North Liverpool/Bootle docks with the potential for 17,000 homes.**
- **Work currently taking place across LCR in developing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).**

Council believes that:

- **Wirral should continue to play its part in meeting housing need, particularly through the delivery of social rent, affordable housing, supported housing and homes for local families.**
- **The housing crisis will not be solved by requiring councils to pursue headline housing numbers that are divorced from local realities and unsupported by the evidence of need for such levels of housing growth.**
- **A fair and effective planning system must allow councils facing exceptional constraints the flexibility to plan for housing in a way that is realistic, sustainable, evidence based and democratically accountable.**
- **A brownfield only approach remains the right strategy for Wirral, supporting regeneration whilst protecting the Green Belt.**

- **Wirral should not be forced into unsound or damaging planning outcomes simply to satisfy a rigid national formula.**
- **Continued local emphasis on Wirral's 11 Regeneration areas as identified within the Local Plan and housing trajectory must remain this council's main priority for housing delivery, with over 10,000 new homes possible within these areas.**
- **Green belt release would only serve to undermine regeneration ambitions for Wirral, and across the city region, and result in an increase in the affordability gap used in the standard formulae for assessing housing need.**

Council resolves to:

1. **Reaffirm its commitment to protecting Wirral's Green Belt whilst continuing to support the delivery of genuinely affordable and sustainable homes.**

2. **Call on the Labour Government to provide greater flexibility within national planning and housing policy for councils facing exceptional constraints, so that housing requirements properly reflect local evidence, infrastructure capacity, environmental limits, brownfield availability and deliverability.**

3. **Requests the Labour Leader of the Council write to the Labour Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out Wirral's case for greater flexibility and opposing any approach that imposes excessive or unrealistic housing figures without proper regard to local circumstances, environmental constraints, regeneration priorities and sustainability.**

4. **Continue to prioritise the delivery of genuinely affordable, social and sustainable homes on previously developed land at pace.**

5. **Work with Wirral's Labour Members of Parliament, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, housing providers and neighbouring authorities to press for a more locally responsive, evidence based approach to assessing housing need.**

6. **To work to ensure that the emerging SDS takes full account of the effective and on-going joint working as set out in National Planning Policy Framework Section 3 paragraphs 25-27, and that Mayor Rotherham seeks devolved powers to strategically support regeneration and housing delivery across the city region by pooling housing targets to achieve the best outcomes for all.**

7. **To ask the Council's Chief Executive to produce an action plan aimed at accelerating housing delivery, particularly for Birkenhead Waterfront, St Werburgh's, Hamilton Park and Central Birkenhead, to consider and assess different delivery models, including utilising the local and regional Small and Medium Enterprise building community to rebuild Birkenhead Town Centre and considering the building of council houses. The Plan should then be submitted to the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee for consideration.**

14.2 **PROTECTING WIRRAL'S WATERWAYS THROUGH IMPROVED POLLUTION REPORTING**

Councillor Gail Jenkinson moved and Councillor Ruth Molyneux seconded a motion submitted in accordance with standing order 13.

Councillor Jenkinson advised that an amendment submitted in accordance with standing order 13.3 by the Liberal Democrat Group had been accepted as friendly.

Following a debate, the motion as amended was then put to the vote and was

Resolved (unanimously) – That

In the face of climate, biodiversity and nature emergencies our brooks, rivers and oceans are becoming more polluted and less supportive of balanced ecosystems. Wirral's brooks and rivers flow into the sea and onwards to the ocean, where life is battling warming and acidification from the increased carbon dioxide in the air.

Our water courses also provide important habitats for insects, which in turn provide food for fish and birds. It is therefore essential that we do what we can to maintain a healthy environment for aquatic life. As well as pollution from litter, our waterways are being killed by sewage overflows and misconnections from dwellings resulting in tap water, which often includes detergent, being released into our streams. They are also vulnerable to sewage misconnections and run-off from animal housing that includes urine and faeces, making our waterways uninhabitable for the majority of life and eventually polluting our oceans.

There are 4 organisations that should work together to resolve reported pollution incidents: the Environmental Agency (EA), United Utilities (UU), Welsh Water and the Council. Each one has different responsibilities depending on the nature of the pollution. Reporting incidents can prove to be fragmented often leading to duplication, delays and reduced public confidence. On occasions, these barriers mean that incidents have gone unreported. A public interface managed

by the Council in conjunction with the EA and UU is essential so that Wirral Council, working alongside relevant agencies has a process that can be tracked from beginning to end, from reporting through to confirmation. This has been successful in other authorities such as Greater Manchester, Somerset and Cornwall.

Council therefore asks that the Director for Operations:

1) **reviews information available to the public on how water pollution can be reported under a variety of circumstances and to whom; and**
2) **works alongside United Utilities and the Environment Agency in reviewing current reporting systems and to consider the feasibility of a reporting system that can be tracked through to resolution ensuring that a pollution incident is resolved in the long term with a briefing note produced for all Members on progress before December 2026.**

14.3 **CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL SALES ON THE HIGH STREET**

Councillor Jenny Johnson moved and Councillor Vida Wilson seconded a motion submitted in accordance with standing order 13.

Councillor Johnson advised that an amendment submitted in accordance with standing order 13.3 by the Labour Group had been accepted as friendly.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny moved a further amendment, seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary, in accordance with Standing Order 13.3 as follows:

Delete and insert additional words in the first and second paragraphs:

Council notes the growing concerns over serious and organised crimes taking place at high street ***and other business*** premises in Wirral, along with the proliferation of shops selling vapes and tobacco related products.

Council thanks residents who have reported premises and welcomes the tireless work of our Trading Standards Officers, working with Merseyside Police and ***the full range of partner agencies*** Immigration Enforcement, to tackle serious and organised crime in Wirral ***and to identify and protect people being exploited by the criminal groups operating these premises***.

Delete and insert additional words in bullet point 3 and insert additional paragraphs under 'Council notes:'

- That the links between organised crime and ***illegal trading*** 'Dodgy Shops' on the High Street is ***are*** well understood by professionals and the public alike with communities exposed to associated ***organised crime groups often using premises as a front for wider*** criminality including anti-social

behaviour, theft and violent crime, drug supply, ***and, in the most serious cases, the exploitation of vulnerable people including*** modern slavery, and child sexual exploitation.

- ***The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026, which received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and introduces a retail licensing scheme and stronger enforcement powers against illicit tobacco and vape sales, providing the structural tools to prevent rogue traders operating on our high streets.***

- ***That the adopted Wirral Drugs Strategy 2023–2027, developed by the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership with Merseyside Police, Probation and NHS partners, commits to a whole-system approach to diversion, prevention and enforcement that maximises harm reduction, breaks the cycle of addiction, offending and imprisonment, and protects children and young people from exploitation related to the drug trade; and that the Strategy records 121 drug-related deaths in Wirral between 2019 and 2021, rising each year.***

Delete and insert additional words in preamble before Council 'resolves to request:'

With the proliferation and devastating effects of drugs, such as ketamine, on Wirral's young people and organised crime reaching into every Wirral community***ies*** via these shops, Council believes now is not the time to become 'soft on drugs' ***deviate from the evidence-led approach of the adopted Wirral Drugs Strategy 2023–2027, which combines robust action against criminal supply and exploitation with prevention, treatment and recovery,*** and therefore resolves to request:

Insert additional words under points 1, 2, 3 and 5, and add an additional point 6 under Council 'resolves to request:'

1. the Leader of the Council and all Group Leaders to publicly reaffirm this Council's commitment to safe communities, strong policing, and a zero-tolerance approach to illegal drug activity ***by the organised crime groups who profit from it whilst committing to delivering on the adopted Wirral Drugs Strategy 2023–2027.***
2. the Leader of the Council and all Group Leaders to write to the Home Secretary to confirm this Council's support for the continued enforcement of existing drug laws and oppose the decriminalisation or legalisation of controlled drugs, ***while also prioritising the diversion of people with drug dependence into treatment and recovery, in line with the adopted Wirral Drugs Strategy 2023–2027***
3. the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee to continue to monitor the effectiveness of Wirral's Drug Strategy 2023 – 2027 ***and to***

bring forward proposals for its renewal beyond 2027, maintaining its whole-system, harm-reduction approach, ahead of the strategy's expiry.

5. the Director of Operations produce a briefing note for all members on the current powers and controls over high street operations ***and other business premises causing persistent nuisance or anti-social behaviour affecting residents,*** and how the Trading Standards Team can be supported to develop and expand its work in this area. ***The briefing note should include:***
   a) preparation for the implementation of the retail licensing scheme under the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026;
   b) the safeguards applied during joint enforcement operations, including the Council's duties as a First Responder under the National Referral Mechanism, to ensure that anyone who may be a victim of modern slavery or exploitation is identified and offered support.
6. ***The Leader of the Council and all Group Leaders to write to the Home Secretary to express this Council's support for the approach recommended by Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of Drugs, combining action against the organised crime groups who profit from the drug trade and exploit vulnerable people with properly funded treatment, recovery and harm reduction services, and to call for the treatment and recovery funding that underpins the national drug strategy to be confirmed on a sustainable, multi-year basis in place of current one-year funding cycles.***

Following a debate, the Civic Mayor applied Standing Order 9.1 as three and half hours had now elapsed since the commencement of the meeting. The debate was concluded by the seconder and the Member with the right of reply and the matters were put to a vote without further discussion.

The Green Group amendment was put to a vote and lost (19:42) (1 abstention).

The motion as amended by the Labour Group was then put to a recorded vote in accordance with Standing Order 17 as follows:

For the motion (48) Councillors: Ainsworth, Baldwin, Basnett, Gary Bennett, Stephen Bennett, Booth, Brame, Cameron, Carubia, Cooper, Cox, Angie Davies, Graham Davies, George Davies, Foulkes, Gardner, Gilchrist, Green, Grey, Hall, Andrew Hodson, Kathy Hodson, Jobson, Johnson, Jones, Kelly, Kenny, Laing, Luxon-Kewley, Martin, Grahame McManus, Julie McManus, Mountney, Tony Murphy, Povall, Powell-Wilde, Raymond, Redfern, Rennie, Skillicorn, Stewart-Laing, Kaitlin Stuart, Paul Stuart, Sullivan, Williams, Williamson, Wilson, Wood

Against the motion (12) Councillors: Cleary, Cooke, Gorman, Graham, Grier, Jenkinson, Lamb, Molyneux, Kieran Murphy, Tomeny, Craig Walsh-McDonald, Jason Walsh-McDonald

Absenstion (1) Councillor Jordan

It was therefore,

Resolved (48:12) (1 Abstention) – That

Council notes the growing concerns over serious and organised crimes taking place at high street premises in Wirral, along with the proliferation of shops selling vapes and tobacco related products.

Council thanks residents who have reported premises and welcomes the tireless work of our Trading Standards and Legal Officers, working with Merseyside Police and Immigration Enforcement, to tackle serious and organised crime in Wirral, and thanks them for this.

Council notes:

- **The success of Operation Shea last summer which resulted in more than 53,000 illegal cigarettes worth £40,000, 13.2kg of hand rolled tobacco worth £20,000, and in excess of 1,000 illegal vapes worth £10,000 being seized.**

- **That since January 2026 and responding to residents and councillors' concerns, enforcement operations involving Wirral Trading Standards, British Gas, Immigration Enforcement and Merseyside Police have led to closure orders of 15 premises in areas including Liscard, West Kirby, Heswall and Moreton, and that funding from the Labour government has supported Wirral Council's recruitment of a new Tobacco and Vapes Apprentice. This is along with two additional Regulatory Compliance Officers, funded by Public Health.**

- **That the links between organised crime and 'Dodgy Shops' on the High Street are well understood by professionals and the public alike with communities exposed to associated health risks from illegal tobacco products, harm to the local economy, and criminality including anti-social behaviour, theft and violent crime, drug supply, modern slavery, and child sexual exploitation.**

With the proliferation and devastating effects of drugs, such as

ketamine, on Wirral's young people and organised crime reaching into every Wirral community via these shops, Council believes now is not the time to become 'soft on drugs' and therefore resolves to request:

1. **the Leader of the Council and all Group Leaders to publicly reaffirm this Council's commitment to safe communities, strong policing, and a zero tolerance approach to illegal drug activity.**

2. **the Leader of the Council and all Group Leaders to write to the Home Secretary to confirm this Council's support for the continued enforcement of existing drug laws and oppose the decriminalisation or legalisation of controlled drugs; and to welcome the government's latest moves to give greater shop closure powers to local authorities and to launch a crackdown on the marketing of vapes to children and young people through the use of targeted flavours and packaging.**

3. **the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee to continue to monitor the effectiveness of Wirral's Drug Strategy 2023 – 2027.**

4. **the Children, Young People and Education Committee to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of drug and substance misuse education in Wirral schools, including trends in pupil behaviour, safeguarding incidents, and engagement with prevention and support services.**

5. **the Director of Operations produce a briefing note for all members on the current powers and controls over high street operations and how the Trading Standards Team can be supported to develop and expand its work in this area.**

14.4 **NATIONAL PLANNING SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Councillor Stuart Kelly moved and Councillor Carubia seconded a motion submitted in accordance with standing order 13.

As the guillotine had passed, the motion was put to the vote and was

Resolved – That

Council notes that the Labour Government intends to introduce a new mandatory National Scheme of Delegation for Planning decisions and has published draft regulations to bring that into effect from 31st October 2026.

Currently, Wirral's Ward Councillors can ask for an application to be taken out of delegation to be considered by the Planning Committee, however under the new proposed regulations, a Councillor may receive dozens of objections from residents but will be unable to have an application heard by committee creating levels of frustration within communities.

Wirral residents will also lose their right to refer contentious applications to elected members for consideration. Petitions or objections, even for 'minor' developments of up to nine houses, which could still have significant impacts on residents' lives and the local area will not be allowed.

The new 'gateway' referral mechanism proposed for committee consideration is to be narrowly defined and it is expected only to be used exceptionally, further undermining democratic oversight, curtailing councillors' ability to effectively represent their residents.

The government's justification that the changes would improve efficiency and deliver housing targets is incorrect, when nationally 96 per cent of applications are already determined by officers, and whilst planning committees consider only a small number of complex, contentious or sensitive applications, this level of scrutiny is both proportionate and reasonable.

Council believes:

- **mandatory delegation risks removing local knowledge and democratic scrutiny from controversial decisions and would weaken public confidence in the planning system by removing transparency, accountability and oversight, representing an unacceptable top-down erosion of local democracy.**
- **the proposals to appear to prioritise corporate interests over community engagement, so the true beneficiaries would be developers rather than communities,**
- **without call-in powers, developers have little incentive to engage constructively, and residents would lose opportunities for meaningful input.**

Council resolves to:

1) **Object to Government proposals which will, as currently set out, make the planning system more remote, opaque and divisive with their National Delegation Scheme;**

2) **support any government initiative to properly resource planning departments rather than undermining democratic processes; and**

3) **ask Group Leaders to write to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask them to stand by the promise for greater devolution to local government and to abandon these regulations designed to remove planning powers from councils and communities.**

MINUTE EXTRACT

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 22nd July 2026

21 **NEW WIRRAL PLAN**

The Interim Director of Transformation introduced a report which presented the Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031, for Policy and Resources Committee to consider and recommend to Council for approval.

The Plan is the primary document in the Council's policy framework and set out the priorities and planned activities over the four-year election cycle. The previous Plan (Wirral Working Together 2023- 27) was approved in December 2023. The new Plan took account of changes in the Council's operating environment and set out a new direction to create a more sustainable model for Council service delivery which addressed the Council's financial challenges.

Members welcomed the Plan's clear and accessible approach, sought assurances regarding digital inclusion, community hubs, data sharing and service delivery, and emphasised the importance of effective implementation and locally relevant outcomes before agreeing to recommend the Plan to Council for approval.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee endorsed the new Wirral Plan for 2027 to 2031 and recommended it for approval by Council.

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WIRRAL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

22 JULY 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**NEW WIRRAL PLAN 2027 - 2031**
REPORT OF:	**INTERIM DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report presents the Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031, for Policy and Resources Committee to consider and recommend to Council for approval.

The Plan is the primary document in the Council's policy framework and sets out the priorities and planned activities over the four-year election cycle. The previous Plan (Wirral Working Together 2023- 27) was approved in December 2023. The new Plan takes account of changes in the Council's operating environment and sets out a new direction to create a more sustainable model for Council service delivery which addresses the Council's financial challenges.

The new Plan also responds directly to recommendations set out in the last Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) and 2024/25 Annual Audit Report.

This report is relevant to all wards and is a Key Decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee is requested to endorse the new Wirral Plan for 2027 to 2031 and recommend it for approval by Council.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Wirral Plan is the primary document in the Council's policy framework as set out in the constitution. The new plan for 2027 to 2031 has been developed to ensure a stronger alignment to the Council's medium term financial plan and directly responds to recommendations from the Local Government Association CPC in October 2025 and Annual Audit Report for 2024/25.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 There is a constitutional requirement (Article 4, paragraph 4.3 (b)(ii)) for the Council to have an approved plan in place, therefore no other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The current Wirral Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023 – 27 was approved in December 2023. Work commenced in Autumn 2025 to refresh the plan to better take account of the Council's financial challenges and Medium-Term Financial Plan. Given the scale of these challenges and need to transform the Council to create a more sustainable model of delivery, a completely new plan has now been developed.

3.2 The Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031: A New Chapter for Wirral (included as Appendix 1) directly responds to recommendations from the last Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in October 2025. The feedback report of the CPC highlighted a need for the Council to: 'Review the Wirral Plan in the context of its challenging financial position with a view to sharpening the document around fewer priorities and activities to ensure it aligns with and supports the Medium-Term Financial Plan'.

3.3 The new plan is built around four key aims:

1. To deliver reliable everyday services so everyone benefits.
2. For everyone to have better connections with their local community and more resilience to cope with life's challenges.
3. To be pro-active and increase the amount of early help people can access.
4. Grow the economy and create good jobs for Wirral residents.

3.4 A number of other plans and strategies have been developed or are planned for development that enable and support the Wirral Plan. Where these are included in the appendices, they are for information:

- **Making a difference for Wirral** — A guide for staff to change and improve services so the Council is sustainable. This is our target operating model and is included as Appendix 2.
- **People Strategy** — How we will support our workforce to develop and deliver the Wirral Plan. This is included as Appendix 3.

- **Data and Technology Strategy** — Data and technology is the foundation for developing a sustainable council, including AI for automation, navigation and identifying needs early. This strategy is currently in development.
- **Assets/Estates Strategy** — This will ensure we have the right accommodation for delivering our services including hubs for more local delivery. A new strategy is currently in development to replace the one approved in 2022.
- **Jobs and Growth Strategy** — This strategy will set out how we create the conditions for investment in new business and housing. This will refresh the current Economic Strategy 2021 – 26.
- **Medium Term Financial Plan** — Refreshed annually, this plan articulates the actions and the trajectory to be sustainable over the next three years of the government's current funding settlement.

3.5 Monitoring the plan will take place through the new Local Outcome Framework (LOF) recently published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The LOF is based around 16 priority outcomes that cover the breadth of Council service delivery and include over 100 measures that can be benchmarked against other local authorities. Additional measures may be added to reflect local Wirral priorities. The Council's performance against the LOF will be published on the website and updated as new data becomes available. The LOF can be viewed through this link: Wirral Outcomes Framework | wirral.gov.uk

3.6 The Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031 is intended as a new chapter in the relationship between the Council and residents. The overall aim is for services to be more accessible within local communities with support being available earlier to address resident needs before they get worse and require more costly interventions. This approach will make the Council more financially sustainable in response to increasing costs and social care demands.

3.7 To achieve this the Council will develop community hubs across four defined localities to enable communities to access services easier. The aim is that hubs will offer a wider mix of both public sector and voluntary, community and faith sector services.

3.8 The draft Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031, attached as Appendix 1 of this report, uses stock photographs as placeholders, these will be updated with Wirral specific photographs for the final version.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from agreeing the Wirral Plan. The new Wirral Plan responds to the feedback from the LGA to reduce the number of priorities and activities to be more realistic and ensure better alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The Council Plan is the primary document in the Council's policy framework in lie with the constitution.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. Over the lifetime of Plan there may be resource implications as a result of introducing new ways of working. These will be reported as part of any proposed projects that seek to introduce new service delivery models.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Corporate Risk Register will act as the risk register for the Wirral Plan. Regular updates are reported to Policy & Resource committee and the Audit & Risk Management Committee.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Wirral Plan has been developed following engagement with political group leaders, council members, senior officers and staff forums. The plan has also been informed by the themes emerging from the Wirral Conversation which involved a programme of engagement from March to May 2026 for elected members and council officers to meet with the public to better understand people's priorities and expectations in relation to improving Council services. The outcome of the Wirral Conversation is included as Appendix 4.

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. An Equality Impact Assessment 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. The EIA for the Wirral Plan is included at the following: EIA Council Plan.pdf

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Wirral Plan sets out a framework for how service delivery will be prioritised around greater local support for residents, working in partnership with other service providers in the public and voluntary sectors. This is based around improving local connections and resilience that will empower people and communities to do more for themselves within their localities which will lead to a more sustainable model of Council service delivery.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 A key aim of the Wirral Plan is to grow the economy and create good jobs for Wirral residents. This will be achieved through securing investment in regeneration schemes and housing development as well as through procurement and commissioning opportunities where these arise.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Wirral Plan supports improved connections and resilience for residents to access local support and help as early as possible within their local communities. Improved partnership working between public services and local voluntary, community and faith groups across four defined localities will help improve local resilience and multi-agency working.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Mike Callon**
Head of Corporate Office

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031
Appendix 2 – Making a difference for Wirral
Appendix 3 – People Strategy
Appendix 4 – Wirral Conversation feedback report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023 - 27
Medium-Term Financial Plan
LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report (March 2025)
Making a Difference for Wirral
People Strategy
Digital, Data and Technology Strategy
Asset Strategy
Wirral Growth Strategy
Local Outcome Framework
Wirral Conversation Themes Report

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in accordance with its Terms of Reference in the Council constitution Part 3 (B), articles 6 & 7 section 1.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy & Resources Committee Council	21 November 2023 4 December 2023

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Wirral Plan

2027 to 2031

DRAFT

A **new chapter** for Wirral

WIRRAL

This is our shared plan to 2031, to write a **new story** for our wonderful and **vibrant peninsula**

People live well,
Wirral **thrives**

Welcome to a new chapter for Wirral

Wirral is a place with many strengths. We are fortunate to have vibrant communities, dedicated local organisations, successful businesses, valued public services and people who care deeply about where they live.

Like many places across the country, we face significant challenges. Demand for services continues to grow, financial pressures remain considerable, and too many people still experience poor health, inequality and barriers to opportunity. At the same time, Wirral has enormous potential and a proud history of people coming together to make things happen.

This Plan sets out our shared vision for Wirral to 2031. It provides a clear framework for how we will work together to improve outcomes for residents, support sustainable growth and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live well and for Wirral to thrive.

We know that achieving this ambition will require us to do things differently.

It means listening more closely to residents, businesses and partners and being open about the challenges we face. We need to learn from what works and build stronger relationships with our communities. And we will have to boldly transform the way the Council operates.

The future of Wirral will not be shaped by the Council alone. Success will depend on the collective efforts of residents, communities, businesses, public services and partner organisations working towards shared goals.

By combining our strengths, knowledge and resources, we can create lasting change and deliver ***better outcomes for everyone.***

The Wirral Plan is built around four long-term aims for the borough, supported by clear and tangible commitments. It reflects a shared ambition across the Council and our partners to ***focus on what matters most to local people and to create a Wirral where people, communities and places can flourish.***

Together, we can build on Wirral's strengths, tackle the challenges ahead and create a borough that future generations are proud to call home.

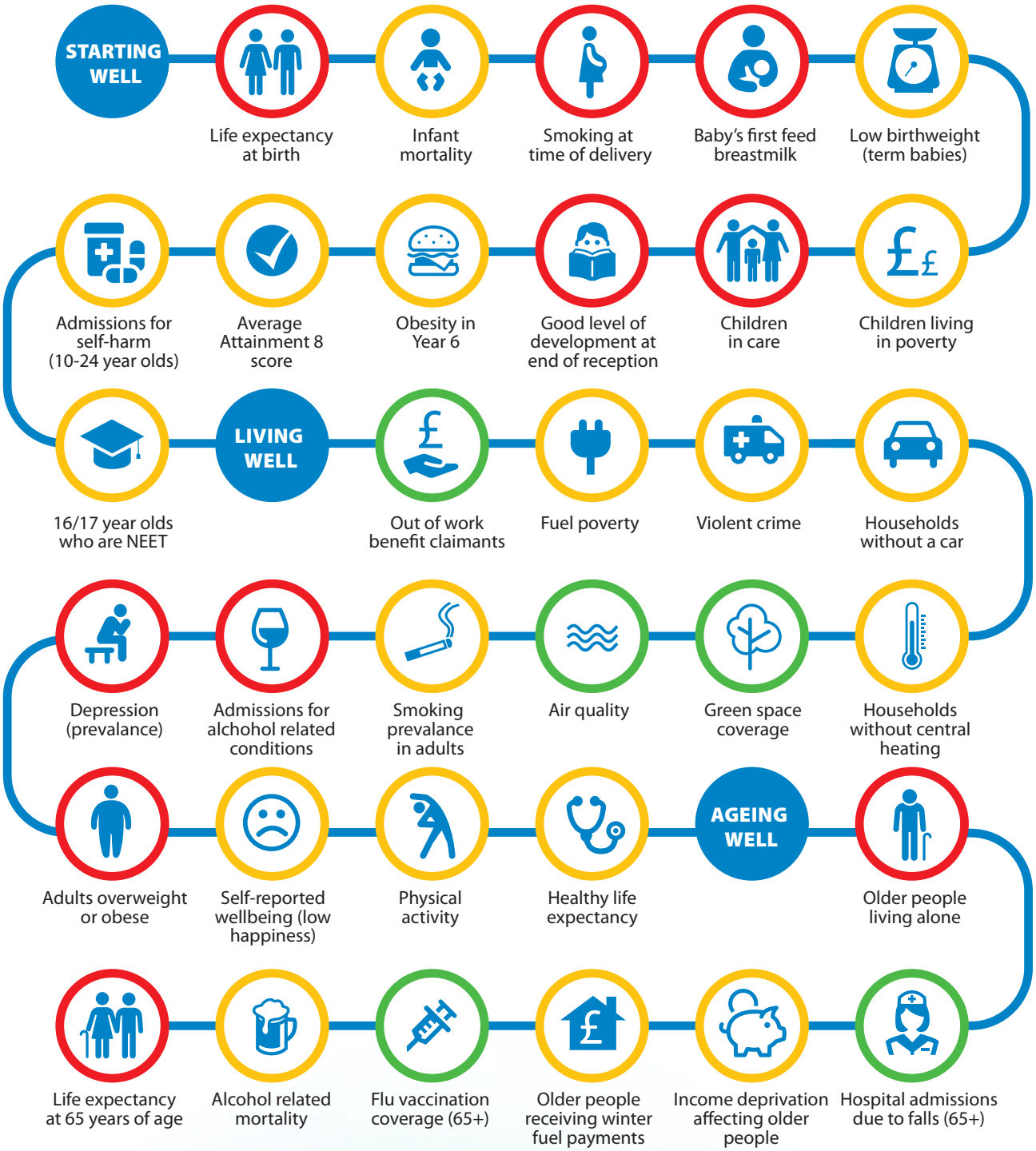
Picture to be inserted

Cllr Paula Basnett
Leader of Wirral Council

Picture to be inserted

Matthew Bennett
Chief Executive

Living in Wirral: Outcomes compared with England



KEY: Comparison with England

Better | No significant difference | Worse

1. Reliable everyday services

The first aim is to deliver reliable everyday services so everyone benefits.

There is always the danger of things going wrong in your life and needing to access early help or one of the hundreds of services we offer. But for most of us our interaction with the Council is through everyday services such as the bins, roads, street cleaning, leisure centres and parks.

In the Wirral Conversation, residents made it clear that ***everyday services matter***. People want reliable delivery, cost-effective services, and a quick response if something goes wrong.

You will:

1. Continue to access everyday, cost-effective and reliable services from the Council.
2. Be supported by a Council that advocates on behalf of residents, listens to residents and businesses, and is focused on what people really value.
3. Receive help if you want to keep your neighbourhood clean or contribute to your community in other ways.
4. Continue to access non-essential services that are financially sustainable such as leisure centres (within a 15 minute drive) and the Floral Pavillion.
5. Get a quicker response from the Council, including on the phone and when navigating the Council website.

2. Connections and resilience

Our second aim is for everyone to have better connections with their local community and more resilience to cope with life's challenges.

We are designing services to respond to the Wirral Conversation. So support is closer to home, delivered in local hubs, and made easy to access. Wirral is lucky to have so many excellent charities and community groups that we can work with more closely.

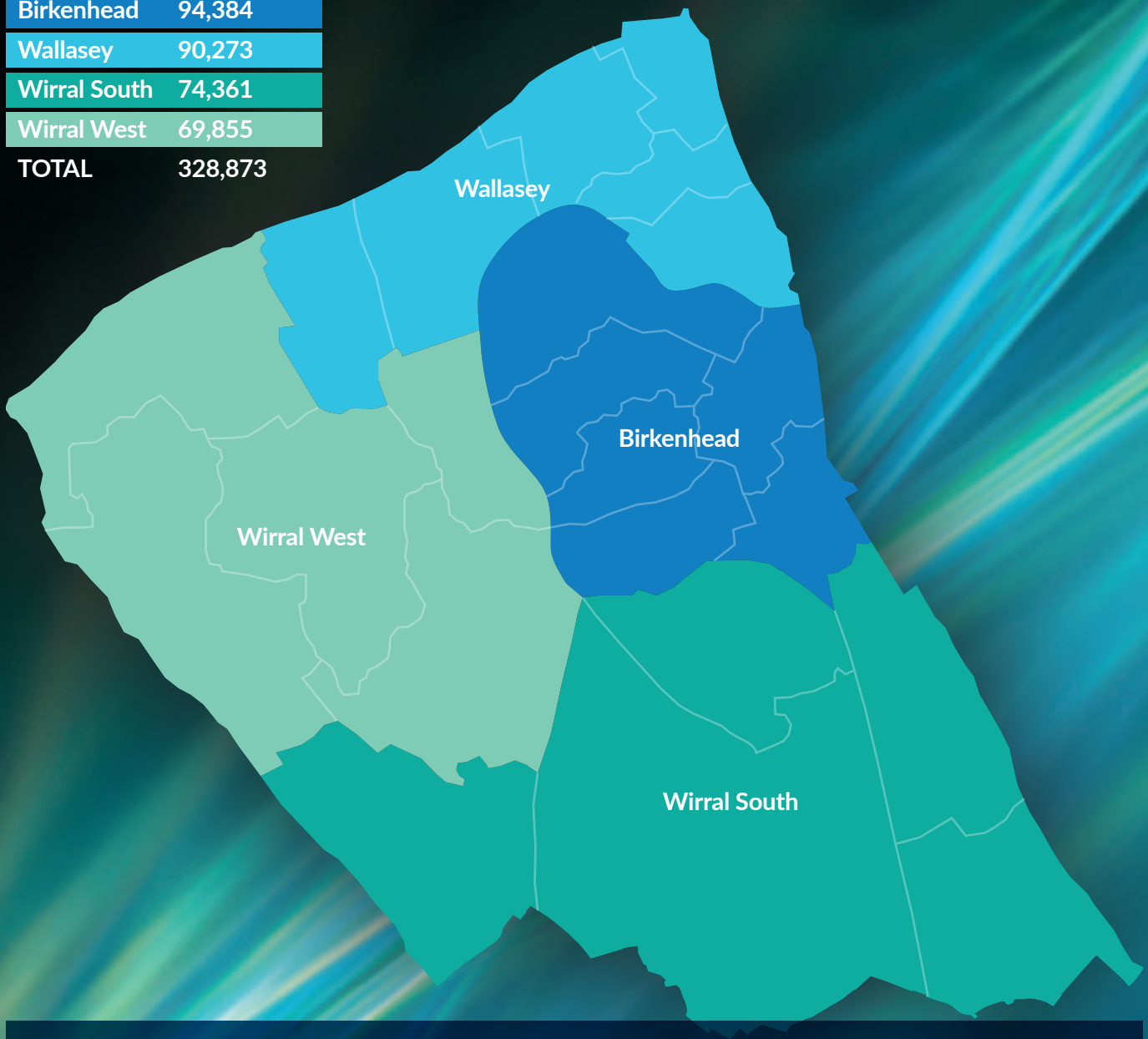
Wirral is divided into four localities, which helps us to understand local needs, people and community resources. By moving our staff to localities, we can ensure services are ***closer to home*** and more accessible, join up with local services such as the NHS, and wrap around people's needs.

You will:

1. Feel better connected to your local community, resources, activities and services that keep us all resilient.
2. Find it easier to navigate physical Council and partner services, self-serve and draw on local resources so you get help earlier and more easily.
3. Be able to access local community hubs including drop-ins, clinics and services closer to home.
4. Experience better alignment with local needs and priorities, as Council services operate from four localities.
5. See local services joining up across the Council, NHS, GPs, Police, DWP, Schools and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations.

Four localities of Wirral

	ONS Total Population
Birkenhead	94,384
Wallasey	90,273
Wirral South	74,361
Wirral West	69,855
TOTAL	328,873



Measuring outcomes

We will measure success by outcomes that show how people are living well and Wirral is thriving.

To be open with residents and businesses, we will publish a new outcomes framework so everyone can see how well we are doing. This helps us all learn and improve.

The Outcomes Framework will include a narrative for 16 themes such as good homes, health and wellbeing, keeping children safe, transport and the environment. We'll also add other outcomes that are really important to Wirral. In the framework, we will share the actions taken to improve outcomes and impact.

You can see the new outcomes framework at **wirral.gov.uk/outcomes**

3. **Pro-active help for people**

The third aim is to be pro-active and increase the amount of early help people can access.

Our biggest demand and costs are for Adult Services, Children's Services and Housing. If we don't manage these budgets well, we will not be able to afford other things the Council delivers.

The best way to reduce the cost of Adult, Children's and Housing services is by supporting more people and helping them earlier. (So needs don't escalate, people don't need expensive crisis services, and their lives are better.)

It's in everyone's interests for Wirral to be an ***Early Help Council.***

You will:

1. Experience better wellbeing, health and safety with less risk of crisis.
2. Be able to access more online services, advice and guidance and self-help – and it will be easier to navigate.
3. Tell your story less often – because public services share data and link up.
4. Get joined up, pro-active and preventative support from the Council, so you don't pinball around from service to service.
5. See Council staff going the extra mile to help you to access services, navigate online or visit local community hubs.

4. Growth for Wirral

Our fourth aim is to grow the economy and create good jobs for Wirral residents.

Wirral is an amazing place - arts and music, green spaces, thriving town centres, the Mersey, Dee and sea on three sides, and neighbours who look out for each other. To be even better we need an ***inclusive and growing local economy.*** An economy that supports local business success, ensures residents can access good jobs, improves homes, reduces inequality, and secures local public delivery.

A refreshed Birkenhead 2040 Framework will transform Birkenhead into a vibrant, family-friendly town with sustainable development and improved public spaces. Birkenhead will be our capital for hubs and people services.

We have learnt lessons following the recent regeneration review and feedback through the Wirral Conversation. Our schools, Wirral Metropolitan College, DWP, businesses, voluntary sector and other partners are critical to train, develop and support the Wirral workforce. We will listen to businesses, including small businesses, and make it easy to invest in Wirral.

You will:

1. Benefit from a regenerated Birkenhead with a refreshed strategy to 2040 – so we reach a tipping point where private money flows into the area and helps all of Wirral.
2. See 2200 more homes built by 2030 in key strategic locations, to increase footfall and income, and support local businesses.
3. Access opportunities from a refreshed Economic Growth Strategy that supports businesses to invest locally.
4. Enjoy Wirral as a major tourist destination, including our coastal towns, green spaces and coastline, and bidding for UNESCO World Heritage status for Birkenhead park.
5. Benefit from social capital and local economic growth due to private investment or voluntary organisations running buildings that the Council no-longer needs.

Timeline

What changes can you expect, and when.

By end of 2026

New **suite of plans** for Council starting with the Wirral Plan

Council restructure around People, Place and Corporate Services completed

Medium Term **Financial Plan** which shows a balanced budget in 3 years

Local outcomes framework published for service improvement

Single view of data and app developed for partners

AI bots to navigate Council policies

More **early help** available for residents online

By end of 2027

Staff are based in **four localities**

More early help available through **community hubs**, including a central hub in Birkenhead

We are Wirral – new training for staff and partners

Expanded Alliance with community groups for service delivery

More training and apprenticeships to **support local businesses**

Reduction in Council buildings

New Cabinet structure for Council **decision making**

By end of 2028

Balanced budget because demand for Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and Specialist Housing is reducing

Sustainable funding model for **Active Wirral** leisure services and **Floral Pavillion**

Telephone and **website** driven by AI to improve navigation

More **efficient transactions** through automation and AI and more self-help options

2029 & beyond

Service improvement across the 16 themes of the Local Outcomes Framework

UNESCO world heritage status for **Birkenhead park**

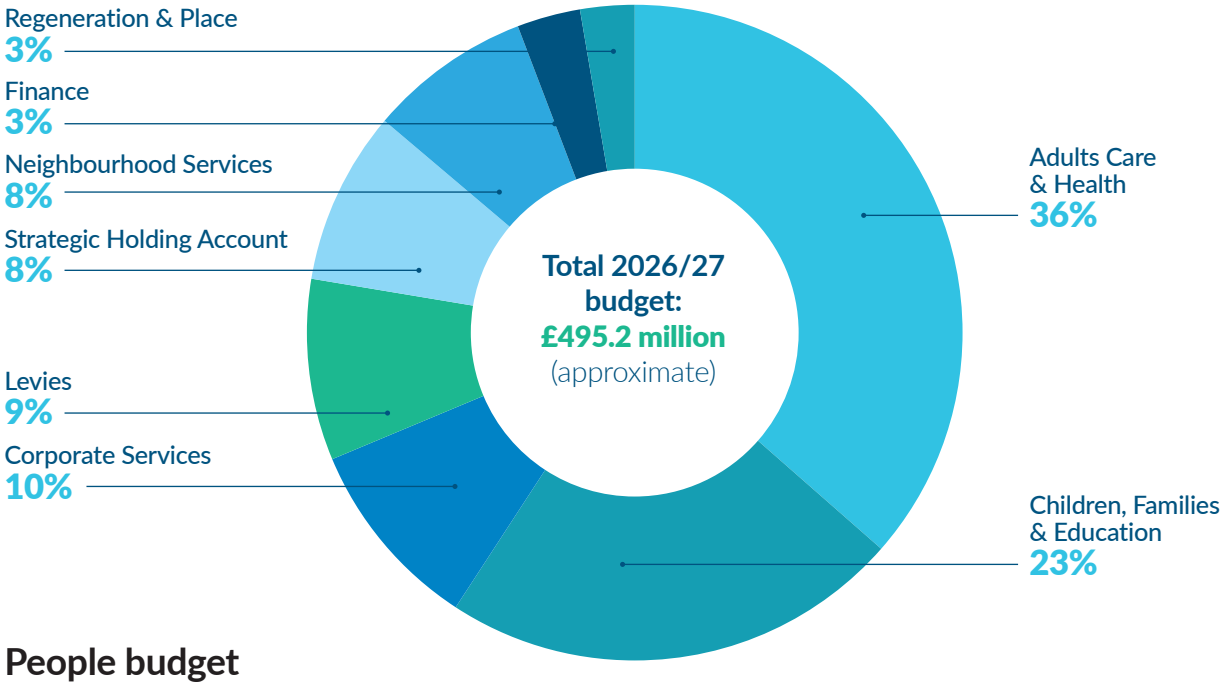
2200 more homes built by 2030 – increasing Council tax revenues

Increase in **business investment** in Wirral – increasing business rates revenue

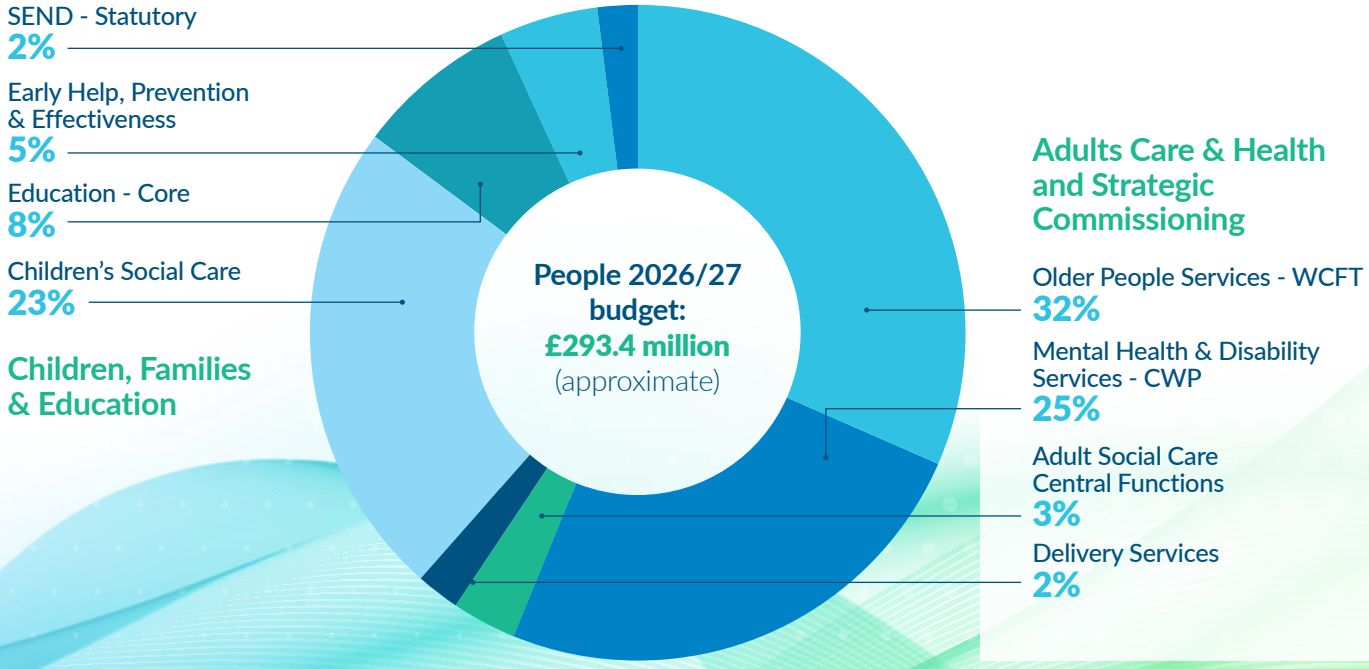
How your money is spent

Wirral Council delivers hundreds of services. There are things we all know about, such as waste and recycling collection, maintaining the parks and roads, and children's and adults social care. But did you also know we manage the Floral theatre, local filming and CCTV? We run a virtual school for children in care, and distribute funding for residents in crisis. We ensure there is good nursery provision, support adult skills, reduce homelessness, improve community safety, monitor and control diseases, promote oral health, commission immunisations, test shellfish, licence street trading, tackle loan sharks, preserve trees, respond to local emergencies, and much much more.

Net budget by Service Area

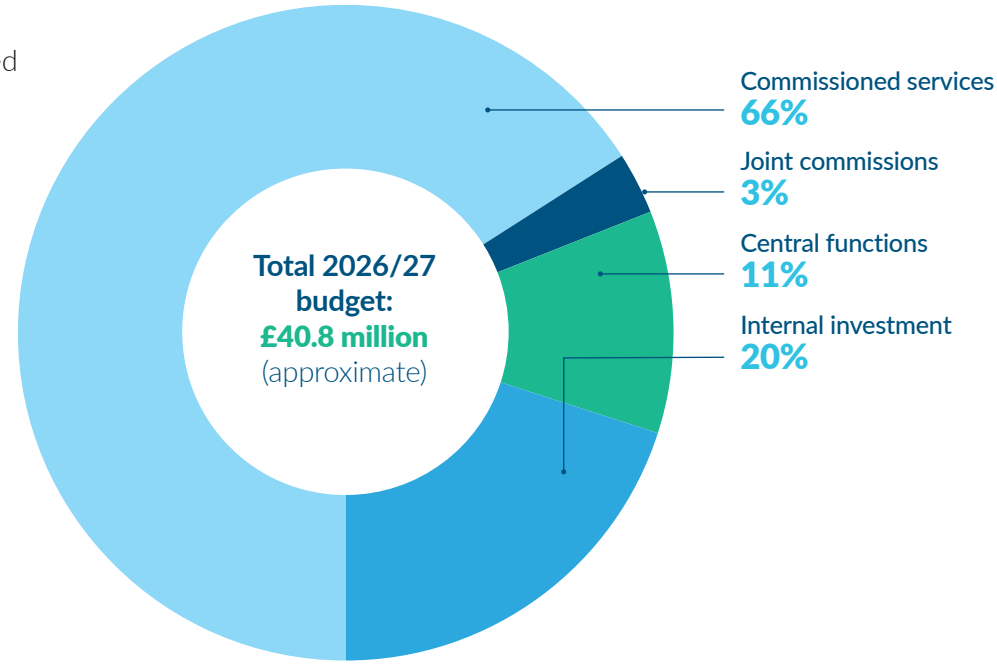


People budget

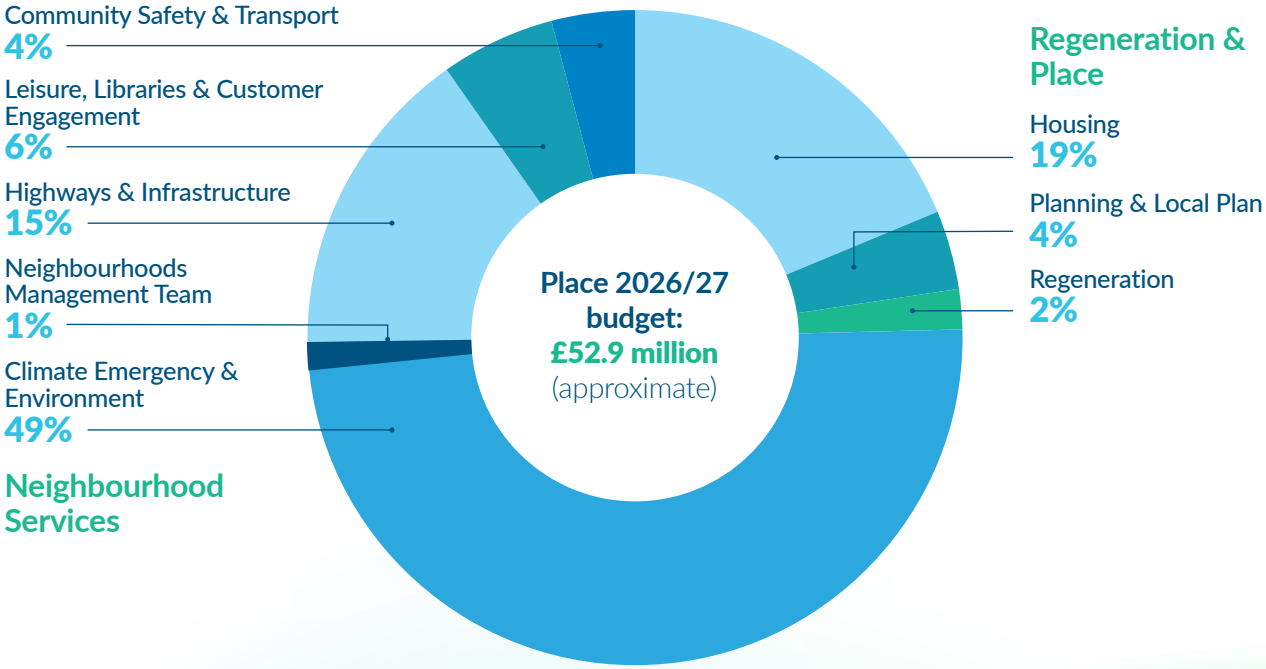


Public Health budget

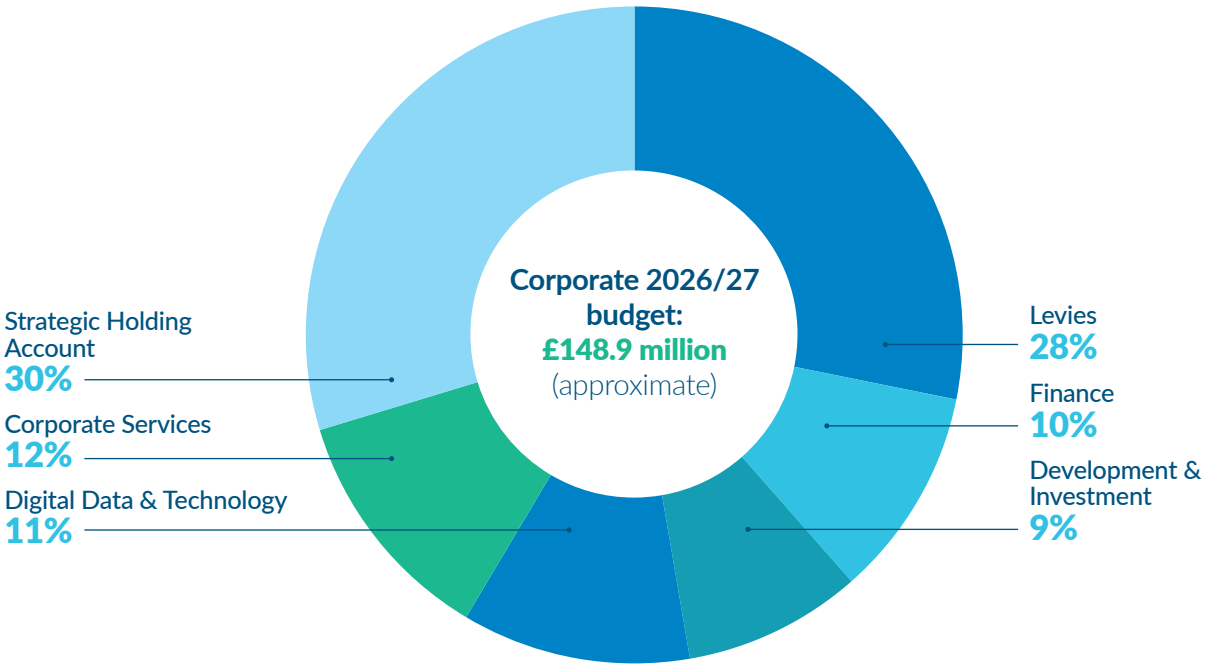
Public Health is fully funded by a ring-fenced government grant and does not make up any part of the core council budget.



Place budget



Corporate budget



Future Plans

The Wirral Plan is our top plan. We are also refreshing a suite of plans and strategies so there is clear and consistent delivery across the Council:

- **Making a difference for Wirral** - is our target operating model. It's written for staff and is effectively the manual or blueprint for a future design for the Council and our services.
- **Medium Term Financial Strategy** - sets out the Council's framework for decision-making. It supports delivery of the Council Plan through a disciplined financial approach that aligns resources, risks and transformation activity to achieve long-term sustainability.
- **People Strategy** - describes how we will support our workforce to develop and deliver the Wirral Plan, including training and cultural changes.
- **Digital and Data Strategy** - describes how we bring together data and use new technology as the foundation for a sustainable council, including AI for automation, navigation and identifying needs.
- **Economic Growth Strategy** - is to create the conditions for new and local business investment in Wirral.
- **Estates Strategy** - will ensure we have the right accommodation for staff in localities, and plan for delivering through hubs in the community.

Making a difference for Wirral

DRAFT

WIRRAL

Making a difference for Wirral is for staff in Wirral Council. It describes how we will make big changes to:

- Help people to improve their own lives
- Improve services and early help
- Deliver savings so Wirral Council is sustainable

The national economy has stagnated and there is less money for public services. In Wirral, demand is increasing and we will have a £50m budget gap in two years.

In the short-term the challenge is to reduce costs and continue to improve outcomes. In the long-term we need to be financially sustainable. It is non-negotiable that, like other councils, we have to make big and difficult changes to balance the budget.

This operating model is to fix both the long- and short-term challenges. This is an exciting time to rethink our relationship with residents, radically improve our delivery, and join up the Council around People, Place and Corporate services.

This is an **exciting** time to rethink our relationship with **residents**

Better outcomes

We're all here because we want to make a difference:

- How people live well, and
- How Wirral thrives.

We need to focus on better outcomes for people, because inequality remains high and there is a 13-year life expectancy difference across the borough.

We will measure the difference we are making using a **national outcomes framework**. The framework tracks how well we are improving people's lives and supporting our communities. There are 16 themes with 130 measures. Each theme will have a clear action plan owned by Directorates and built into service plans to track progress.

Outcome themes from the national framework are:

- Encourage economic prosperity and regeneration
- Increase housing supply
- Increase housing quality
- Reduce rough sleeping and homelessness
- Improve our neighbourhoods
- Reduce climate and protect the environment
- Improve transport and infrastructure
- Best start in life
- Every child achieving and thriving
- Keeping children safe and family security
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Improve adult social care quality
- Improve adult independence, choice and control
- Neighbourhood health and integration
- Reduce child poverty
- Reduce multiple disadvantage

Financially sustainable

Being sustainable is about good financial decision making, supporting people to be resilient, and efficient service delivery that improves lives. We can all contribute to being sustainable.

It's not optional, we must make some big and difficult decisions for the Council to continue delivering with less money. For example,

1. The Wirral Conversation made it clear that the delivery of every day services is really important to residents. Where possible, the quality of delivery will continue to be maintained. For example, we will ensure leisure facilities, including a gym, playing fields and swimming, continue to be available for residents, within a 15 minute drive and accessible via public and sustainable transport. We will continue to collect the bins every week. Access to books will increase. We will measure satisfaction with services and continue to listen to residents' priorities.
2. The cost of some services is higher in Wirral than comparable metropolitan councils. We cannot afford to continue working in this way. We will redesign services so it is the exception for costs to be higher than the mean average. Priority areas for redesign include leisure services and people services (adults services, children's services and housing).
3. We will use artificial intelligence (AI), automation and better data systems to streamline routine tasks such as recording information, handling enquiries and processing information. The overall size of the Council workforce is expected to reduce over time. Over the next five years, we anticipate a reduction of around 10%. Our People Strategy will mitigate the risk of negative impact with all efforts will be made to support staff and minimise compulsory redundancy through offering voluntary redundancy and retraining.
4. The number of buildings the Council maintains will be reduced, to cut the cost of maintenance and to free up assets for business investment. Most staff will work in one of four localities, with frontline delivery often in hubs. Hubs will be a mix of buildings owned by the Council, NHS, DWP, schools, community and faith groups.
5. Self-service options will increase so it's quicker and easier for residents to navigate services and get answers. When residents call the Council, they will be answered quickly by a chatbot that can deal with most enquiries, or hand over to Council staff. Residents will also be supported where they want to, for instance, pick litter or cut verges in their community.
6. Where the Council charges for services, we will charge a competitive price, benchmarked from other Councils or similar services from private businesses.
7. The Council will make it easier for new and existing businesses to invest and grow in Wirral – helping to bring more job opportunities and income into the borough. This will also lead to an increase in business rates and make Council services more sustainable.
8. Priority locations for housing investment include Birkenhead regeneration area and waterfront locations. Both housing and business growth measures will be tracked. We will track progress so we can see the difference this makes for residents, communities, businesses and Council income.

Why this is non-negotiable

- The Council cannot continue operating in our current form and remain financially sustainable.
- Demand for services is increasing faster than the funding we receive.
- This means we must make changes – some services will reduce, stop, automate, integrate or be delivered differently.
- This will affect how we all work, and we each have a role in reducing costs and demand.
- The workforce shape, management structures, estate and processes must change.

New capabilities

To become a sustainable council, we need to reduce the number of people needing urgent or crisis support, particularly in children's social care, adult social care and housing. This means doing more earlier to support people before problems escalate. To do this, we must make significant changes to how services are delivered and how we work with residents.

These changes will introduce new capabilities that improve how we work in communities and use digital tools. Many staff will use these in their day-to-day roles to deliver services differently in the future.

Making a difference for Wirral

We're here to **help people** improve their own lives, **improve services** and **early help**, and **deliver savings** so Wirral Council is **sustainable**

WIRRAL

Community Capability

Community Connections

We support people to **access** their natural local connections and be a contributing and **valued part of their community**

Community Hubs

Many services are delivered in **local hubs** with partners and community groups - close to home and **more accessible**

Early Help

We help people as early as possible to **improve lives** and reduce the need for crisis services

Four localities - working together

Most frontline Council staff will work in one of our four localities working with partners and community organisations:

NHS · Police · Schools · Community Organisations · DWP

- Local relationships
- Relational practice
- Joined-up delivery

Wirral Communities are **stronger together** solving problems **earlier** and **reducing** the number of times residents are passed between services

Using Data & Technology to Make a Difference

Single View

Joined up information about residents and families helps us **understand needs** and offer the **right support** at the right time

Navigation

Residents and professionals can find **support, advice** and **local services quickly** - through websites, apps and chatbots

AI & Automation

We **automate routine tasks** and reduce bureaucracy, freeing up staff time for what matters most - **supporting residents**

Outcomes: People live well and Wirral thrives

People

- Best start in life
- Every child achieving & thriving
- Keeping children safe and family security
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Improve adult social care quality
- Improve adult independence, choice and control
- Neighbourhood health & integration

Place

- Increase housing supply
- Increase housing quality
- Reduce rough sleeping and homelessness
- Improve our neighbourhoods
- Reduce climate and protect the environment
- Improve transport and infrastructure

Prosperity

- Encourage economic prosperity and regeneration

Safety & Inclusion

- Reduce child poverty
- Reduce multiple disadvantage

Measured using the national outcomes framework

Financially sustainable - it's non-negotiable

Good financial decisions, supporting resilience and efficient services that improve lives.

Redesign

Lower costs through simpler, modern services

Deliver

Maintain what matters most to residents

Modernise

Use AI, automation and better data to improve efficiency

Right estate

Fewer buildings, more local hubs, lower costs

Growth

Invest in jobs, regeneration and income

Everyone contributes

We all have a role in reducing costs and demand

Community capability

Communities in Wirral are different for each child, young person and adult. We have strong family bonds, a wider network of connections to communities of interest (such as a football team, work or faith groups), geographic communities, and some people also rely on digital communities. We all have a different mix of these connections, but often the more vulnerable you are to something going wrong in your life, the fewer your community connections.

More services will be delivered in **collaboration with community groups**, potentially using an Alliance to manage the work. (An alliance is a group of organisations working together and sharing risk to deliver a service.) The decision about whether a service is best delivered by the Council, or by a voluntary or private organisation will be based on an assessment of what will have the most advantageous impact for residents and communities.

Community connections: we will support people to access their natural local connections and be a contributing and valued part of their community. Community connections improve resilience and the ability to self-help. This might be about supporting new mums to be part of a whatsapp group, or older residents going to the local hub for a brew, or having a conversation about who can support you.

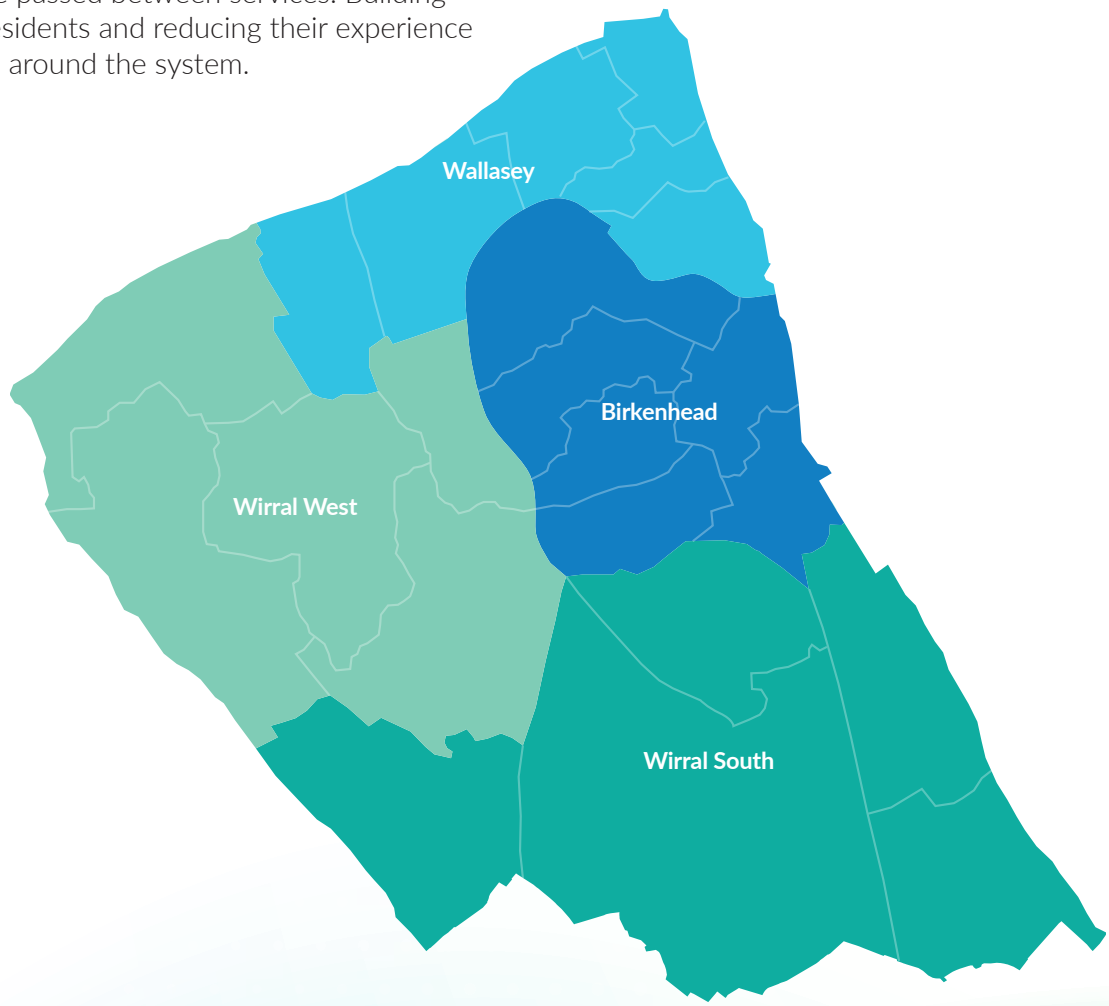
Adult services use a technique called **Three Conversations** to personalise care to individuals, stabilise and connect residents to their community and wider family for ongoing support. The most vulnerable people sometimes have the fewest connections, and we can change that.

Hubs: we have hundreds of local community hubs that families and residents already access to get extra help. We will work with these hubs that are often run by the voluntary and community sectors, and collaborate with partners where there are gaps. Lots of our services will be delivered in hubs so they are more accessible. The Wirral website and chatbots will hold details of what's available when, so you can pop down the road to a local hub to access a drop-in, clinic, group, check-up, etc.

People will be able to access services locally in **hubs**. Some hubs are small, some big, some run by community groups, and others are public sector. Example services include SEND assessment and support, housing, health visiting, planning advice, youth support, skills and training, parent guidance, adaptations, immunisations, debt support and many many more.

Localities: most Council staff will work together in one of our four localities, often in buildings shared with health, police, DWP and charities. By working locally, we build relationships with other professionals and with local community groups and people (relational practice). If we know professionals in schools, GPs and voluntary organisations, we're better able to coach and support each other, and better at meeting needs without referring to another team (at times stepping a little outside our comfort-zone). This means we can solve problems earlier, work for flexibly together, and reduce the number of times residents are passed between services. Building trust with residents and reducing their experience of pinballing around the system.

Children's social care already operates in four localities – improving relationships with local community services, schools and GPs. By operating in localities we will be more responsive, able to draw on local resources and wrap services better around people. We will also change our office space so staff have a base in each locality.



Digital capability

It's hard to avoid how fast technology is changing. We already share data with partners and across the Council, and we are getting better at understanding people's needs. We can use new tech to navigate services, and AI to free up frontline time. Wirral Council is ahead of the curve in rolling out Microsoft Fabric, and we're determined to continue developing our digital and data.

Single view — all Council data will be joined up in one place, helping us to understand needs and pro-actively offer help to reduce the likelihood of needs getting worse (and more expensive to support). Bringing our data together will give us a clearer picture of the people and families we support. People will be able to enter our services through any route, and they will get a consistent joined-up response across social care, education, housing, revenue and benefits, etc. We will share more data with partners where this is appropriate — with joint case management systems and single-view apps for schools and the voluntary sector.

School staff will be able to safely view data about the needs of pupils and what partners are working with them. The school will be able to coordinate their support for a child, sibling or parents with other agencies. And the school will also be able to see which pupils might be at risk of not being in employment, education and training in the future – so they can target their support.

Directory and navigation — we will improve information about what's available in each locality, advice and guidance, and our digital relationship with people. As a Wirral resident, you will have access to tailored websites or apps that display what you are interested in, help you to navigate all of our services, and tell you about local events close to home. Professionals will also know what's available and will pro-actively help people to access early help.

By bringing together data, we will be able to identify who may need more help in the future. For example, older people who may be at risk of falling, families that may become homeless, children who may come into care. Where we have good data, services will be redesigned to support people earlier to stop needs getting worse.

AI and automation — AI will help us to automate some tasks for example, recording case notes, preparing plans, prioritising cases, streamlining processes, chatbots at the front-door, or policy guidance. This isn't about AI decision making where a human should be in the loop — but about freeing up our staff from bureaucracy so we can spend more time face-to-face supporting residents.

Residents phoning the Council front-door will get through straight-away to an accessible voice chatbot that will be able to answer most questions, or handover to a person. That same tech will help residents to quickly navigate our services, advice and guidance and local resources. Where residents are not able to engage with digital technology, we will use telephone calls or face to face support in local hubs.

Design principles

The following design principles set out how we will improve outcomes and financial sustainability and make a difference for Wirral:

Early Help

We will help people to access support as early as possible to improve lives and reduce the need for crisis services.

Local relationships

We have strong relationships with communities, professionals and residents. We deliver and facilitate many services through local hubs, that are closer to home and more accessible.

Digital & Data

We share data and intelligence so we have a clear picture of people's needs and can offer the right support at the right time.

We use AI, automation and data to make work simpler and lower transactional costs.

Advocacy

We advocate for residents and go that extra step.

Agile Working

We are flexible, change services quickly and with minimum viable bureaucracy.

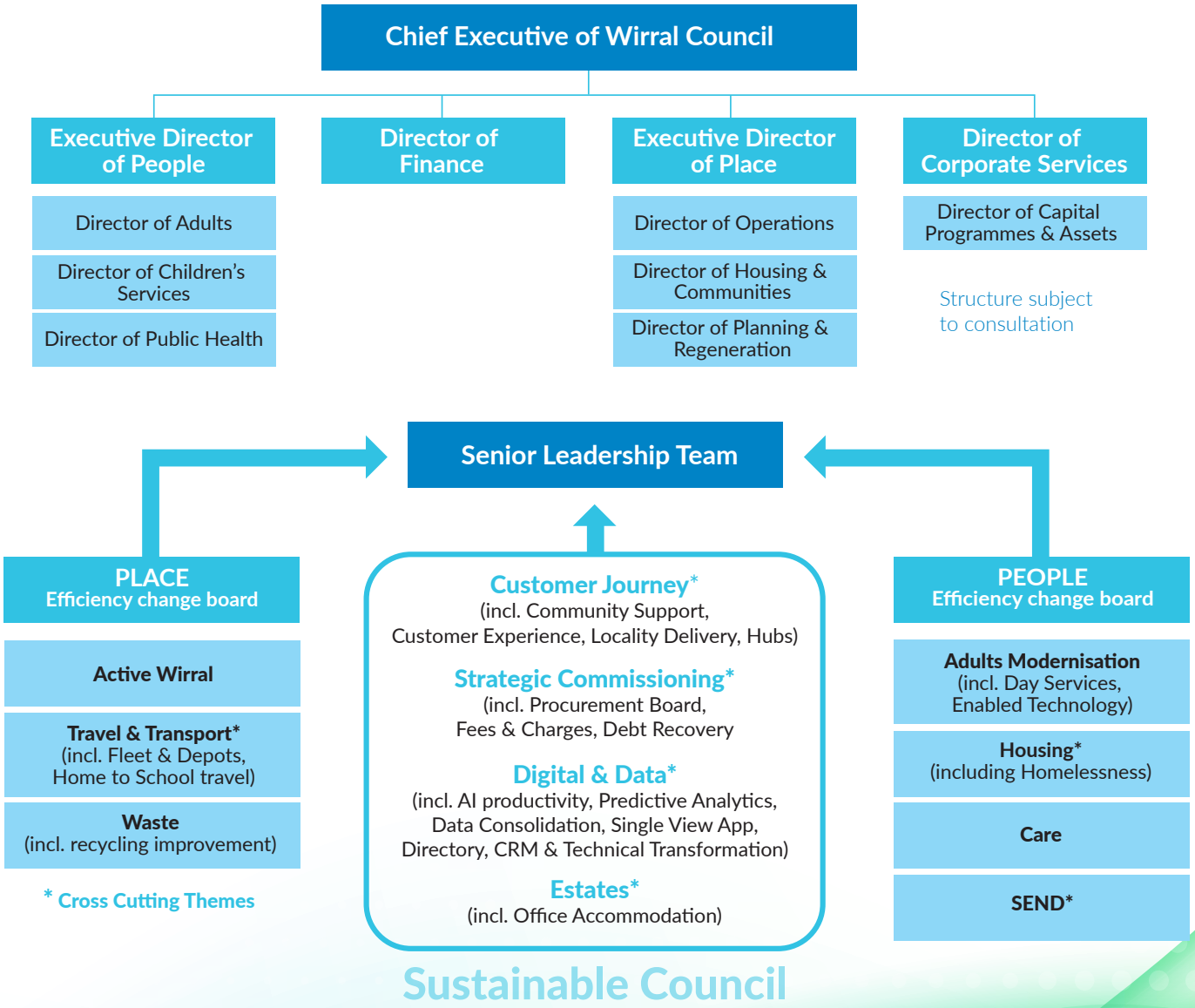
Council Structure

The Council is structured around three directorates for People, Place and Corporate Services.

Each directorate is responsible for improving services, delivering within budget, and relevant change programmes. Executive decisions are made by the Senior Leadership Team.

To become financially sustainable, we are delivering a range of change programmes that support the Council's medium term financial plan (MTFP). We have two portfolios of change programmes called Directorate Efficiency Portfolio and Sustainable Council Portfolio.

Alongside this, we are investing in longer term projects such as regeneration, which support jobs, growth and bring more income into Wirral over time. Another portfolio of capital programmes includes regeneration and the Council's estate.



How our change programmes are managed

The Council currently makes decisions through a committee system with decisions being made by the Council or by Members sitting on Committees. Officers are also able to make some decisions under the Council scheme of delegation. There are six policy Committees which cover all Council Services. There are also regulatory committees covering Planning, Licensing, Standards and Audit.

In May 2027, we are moving to a Leader and Cabinet structure for decision making which will comprise monthly Cabinet meetings for decisions, Scrutiny Committees for oversight and assurance, the existing regulatory committees and six Full Council meetings.

Suite of plans and strategies for a sustainable Council

The Wirral Plan is the Council Plan for the period 2027 to 2031. It's written for residents and describes what we want for people and for Wirral.

Making a difference for Wirral is our target operating model. It's written for staff and is effectively the manual or blueprint for a future design for the Council and our services.

The **Medium Term Financial Strategy** sets out the Council's framework for decision-making. It supports delivery of the Council Plan through a disciplined financial approach that aligns resources, risks and transformation activity to achieve long-term sustainability.

The **People Strategy** describes how we will support our workforce to develop and deliver the Wirral Plan, including training and cultural changes.

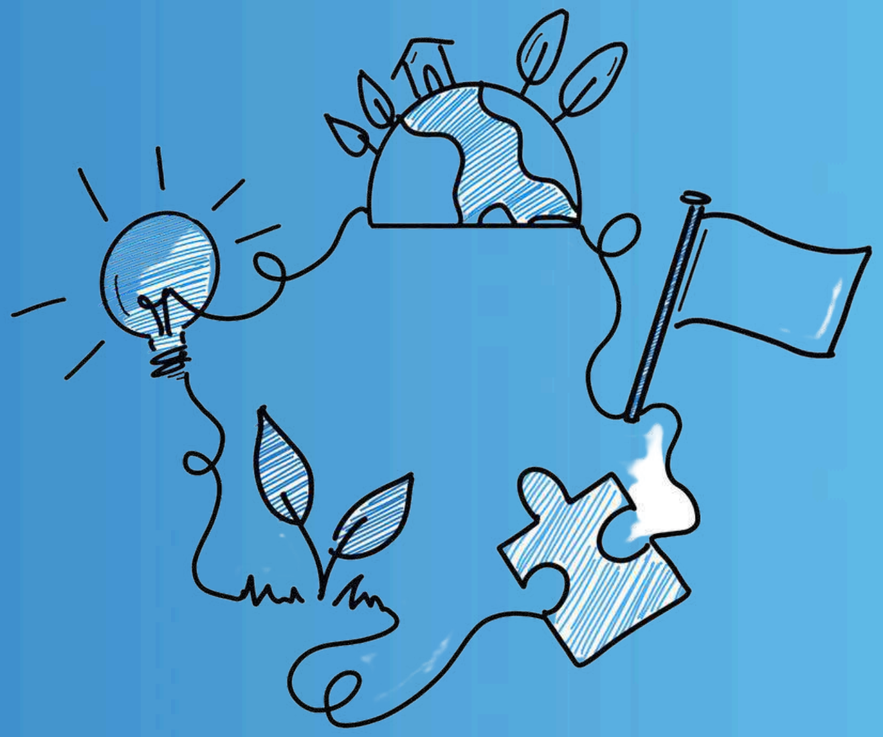
Digital and Data Strategy describes how we bring together data and use new technology as the foundation for a sustainable council, including AI for automation, navigation and identifying needs.

Economic Growth Strategy is to create the conditions for new and local business investment in Wirral and job opportunities for residents.

And the **Estates Strategy** will ensure we have the right accommodation for staff in localities, and plan for delivering through hubs in the community.

People Strategy

2026 - 2031



WIRRAL

We are Wirral | Moving Forward

Text to follow

Cllr Paula Basnett, Council Leader

WIRRAL

We are Wirral | Moving Forward

WIRRAL

Text to follow

Matt Bennett, Chief Executive

How we do things in Wirral | Our Target Operating Model

Our **Target Operating Model** sets out how we will work in the future - how services will change, how we work with communities and how we use data and technology to improve what we do.

Our **People Strategy** focuses on our people.
It sets out how we will support you through change, build the skills you need and help you to work confidently in new ways, making a real difference for our residents.

Put simply,

Our Wirral Plan describes what we want to achieve
Our Target Operating model describes how we will work in the future
Our People Strategy describes how our people will be supported, skilled and ready to deliver it

ACCOUNTABLE

AMBITIOUS

RESIDENT FOCUSED

PROFESSIONAL

developed together

This sketch note has been shaped by colleagues across the organisation bringing together real experiences of what makes us proud, how we show up and how we work together.

At its heart, it reflects a simple idea:

When we work well together, feel supported and are clear on our purpose, we deliver better outcomes for residents - and have a better expeirence at work.

Our People Strategy | Developed Together

We have shaped this people strategy alongside our Target Operating Model and the the Wirral Plan - and, most importantly, with our people.

Colleagues across the organisation have shared their experiences, ideas and priorities. This strategy reflects what you told us matters most, alongside the direction we need to take as an organisation.

By continuing to listen and involve colleagues, we will create a working environment where people can continue to do their best work and make a real difference for our residents.

Our **Staff Forum** and **Focus groups** give colleauges the space to talk openly about their experiences and ideas for change

Our **staff survey** provides a yearly picture of how people feel, what matters most and where we need to focus

Working in partnership with our **Trade Unions** to shape a fair, supportive and forward looking approach for our workforce

Our **Inclusion Group** ensures different perspectives are heard and help us shape a more inclusive workplace

Staff led sketchnote capturing what a good day at work looks like, what makes us proud and how we can work better together

Engaging with our **Elected Members** and **Chief Officers** to align the people strategy with our organisational priorities

We are Wirral | Values in Action

ACCOUNTABLE AMBITIOUS RESIDENT FOCUSED PROFESSIONAL

Across Wirral, colleagues bring our values to life every day through the difference they make for residents, communities and each other. Our values guide how we behave every day, so we deliver great services and make a real difference for our residents.

Take a look at some of our values in action

Accountable

Owning the outcome and making sure things get sorted.

We take ownership and do what we say we will.

We are dependable.

See our Values in Action here

Ambitious

Always looking for better and helping others to do the same.

We don't settle for 'good enough'.

See our Values in Action here

Resident Focused

Putting people at the centre and shaping support around them.

We see the person, not just the problem.

See our Values in Action here

Professional

Doing the right thing, in the right way - with care, skill and respect.

We do the job well and treat people with dignity.

See our Values in Action here

We are Wirral | Values in Action

A snapshot of real nominations from our **One Council Staff Celebration** showing how our values are lived every day

They step in when it matters most, supporting both colleagues and residents

Their positivity and energy lifts the whole team

They go above and beyond to make sure residents get the best support

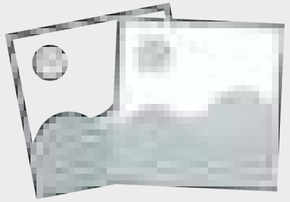
You can always rely on them - they take ownership and get things done.

They don't just do their job - they really care about getting the best outcome

They never lose sight of what matters most - making a difference to people's lives

They support people through really tough moments and never lose their compassion

Images to follow



We are Wirral | This is what makes us, us.

We are made up of

3609

people

16 years

is our average length of service

59%

of us are aged 46 or over

259

25 and 40 year milestones have been recognised

People want to work with us

9030

job applications in the last 12 months

4%

of us identify as LGBTQ+

24

graduates and apprentices are part of the workforce

4.8%

of us are undertaking a professional qualification through an apprenticeship

We have

13

employee groups and networks shaping how we do things

60.2%

of the workforce engaged shared feedback in the Staff Survey

305

staff recieved a nomination in our Staff Celebration

8.22%

increase in employee experience

12.2%

of workforce participating in a staff network group

59

staff suggestions received

5.9%

increase manager experience

33%

of us have actively engaged with our learning experience platform FLO in the last month

85

colleagues participate in our staff forum

WIRRAL

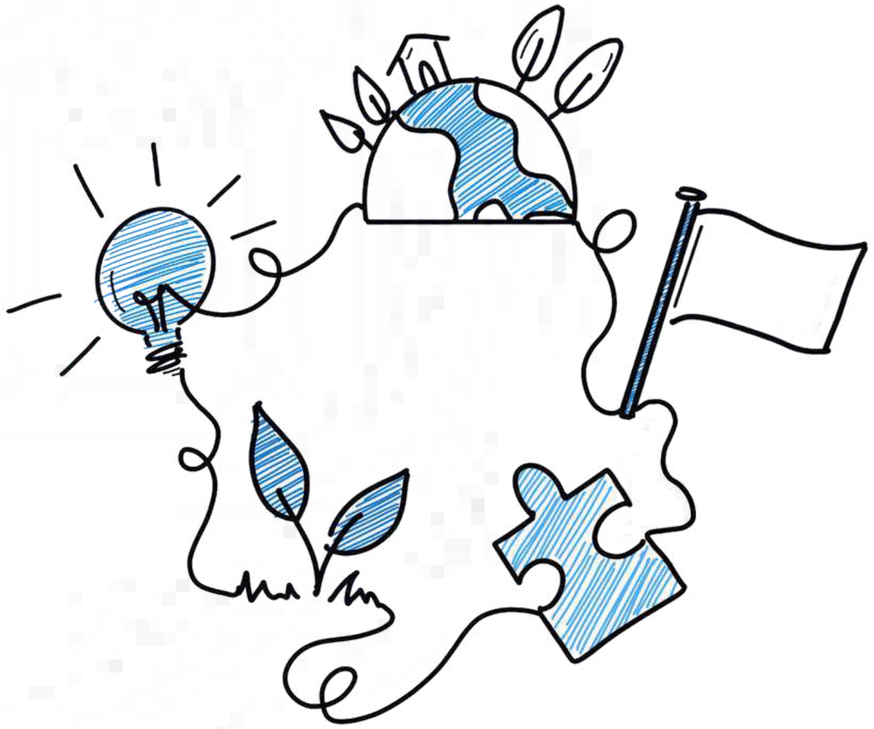
We are Wirral

Our people strategy has five themes, that when delivered together ensure we to have the right skills and capability both for now and for the future, but also the right culture for everyone to thrive.

They are based on what we know and what you have told us, creates a great place to work. They also build on the solid organisational foundations and great practice that already exists at Wirral.

Our 5 themes are:

- **Meaningful Work**
- **Growth & Development Opportunities**
- **Innovation**
- **Positive Work Environment**
- **Leadership & People Management**



We are Wirral | Some of the progress we have made

WIRRAL

Meaningful Work

Over recent years, we've taken important steps to help colleagues better understand the difference they make and how their work makes a difference to our residents.

- Introduced the We are Wirral Experience to
- Strengthened Performance Conversations
- Embedded our values across our how attract, develop and retain our colleagues
- Our staff survey tells us that whilst colleagues are starting to see clearer purpose, not everyone yet feels a strong link between their role and the difference we make for residents.

Growth & Development Opportunities

We've taken steps to strengthen opportunities for colleauges to learn, grow and develop their careers at Wirral.

- Introduced a Talent Strategy to better understand future skills needs and support career development
- Increased apprenticeships and early careers pathways
- Strengthened our approach to workforce planning
- Grown coaching, peer learning and development opportunities, supporting colleagues to learn in different ways

Leadership & Management

Over the past few years, we've taken steps to strengthen leadership and management.

- Launched Aspiring Leaders and Management Development Programmes
- Introduced clear Leadership Behaviour Framework
- Strengthened performance conversations
- Introduced Manager Masterclasses
- Our staff surveys tell us that colleauges report improvements in how they experience their day to day support from their manager.

Positive Work Environment

We've strengthend how we listen to and involve our people.

- We have seen increased participation in ou r staff survey alongside our Staff Forum and Staff Network Groups.
- Strengthened two way communication and dialogue
- Ongoing focus on wellbeing and manager support
- Our latest staff survey tells us that colleagues are increasingly feeling listened to and involved in change, this is an important foundation that we'll continue to actively build upon.

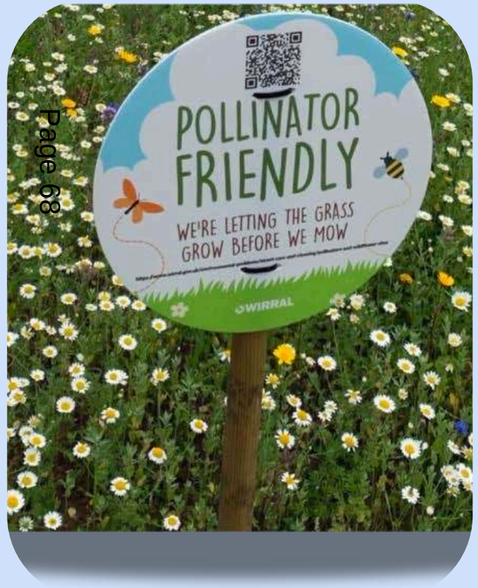
Innovation

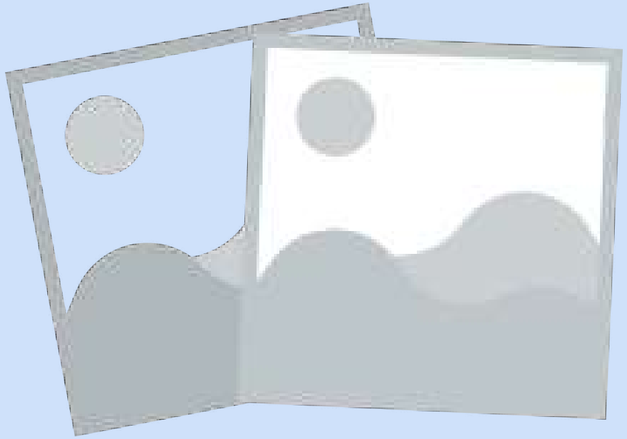
We've taken steps to build a culture where colleagues feel able to share ideas, challenge how things are done and contribute to improving our services.

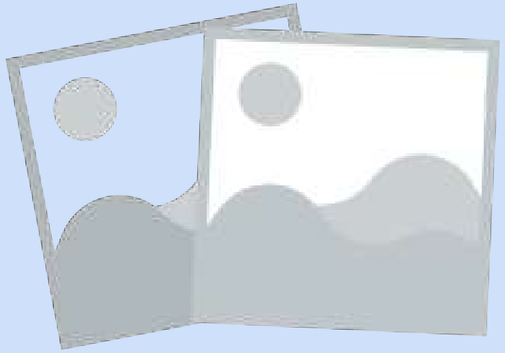
- We've introduced initiatives such as Digital Sparks and our Just a Thought staff suggestion scheme creating more opportunities for colleagues to bring forward ideas and shape how we work.
- Through our Talent Strategy we recognise that good ideas come from all levels of the organisation. We are starting to see more colleagues sharing more ideas, leading to better solutions.

Meaningful Work

Images to follow







Meaningful Work

What we mean...

Making an impact is more than just what we do, it's why we are here.

- I can see how my work helps residents
- I spend less time on unnecessary processes
- I work with others to solve problems

What will be different

I'll spend more time on what matters most

I'll work more closely with colleagues and communities

I'll feel recognised and valued for the work I do

I'll clearly see how my work makes a difference for residents

What we'll focus on

1

Making resident impact part of every day conversations

- We will help everyone to see how their role contributes to outcomes for residents through induction, performance conversations, team meetings and every day practice.
- We will continue to celebrate the great work that is being done, recognising how our people have made the difference to our residents
- We'll share more stories of the difference colleagues are making and recognise great work

2

Remove barriers so people can focus on the work that matters

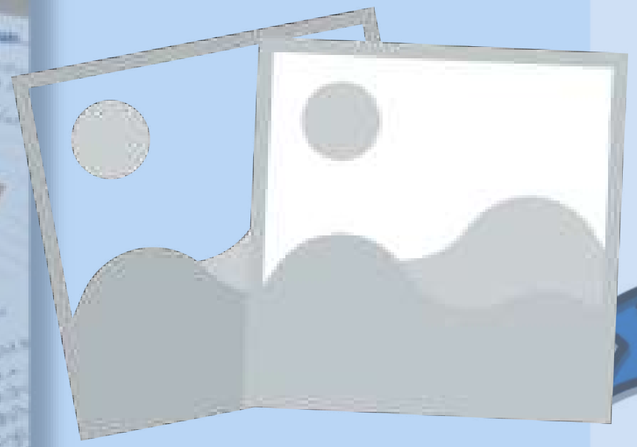
- We will simplify ways of working and reduce unnecessary processes, enabling faster decisions and more time focused on residents and communities.

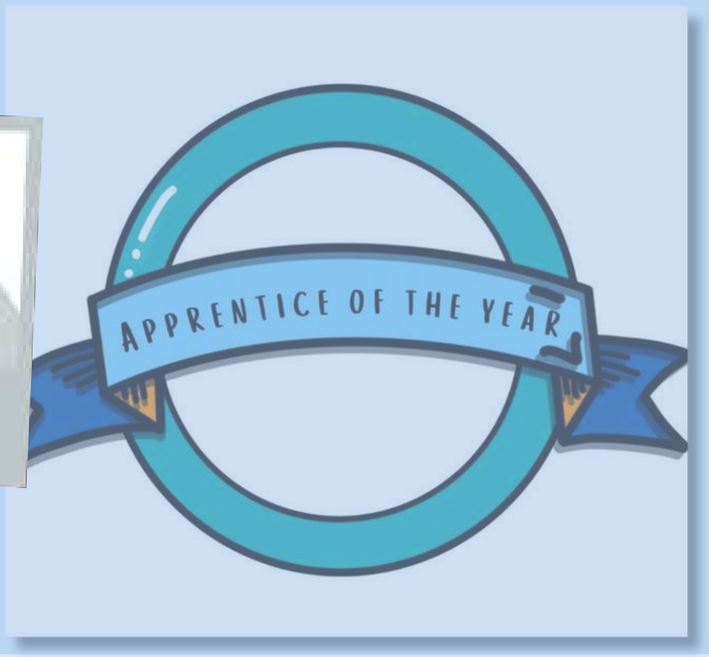
3

Embed a shared sense of purpose across Wirral

- Embed purpose and values across how we attract, recruit and develop our people, how we manage performance
- We'll refresh the We are Wirral Expeirence
- Continue to create opportunities for colleagues to hear from our Senior Leaders

Images to follow





Growth & Development Opportunities

WIRRAL

Growth and Development Opportunities

What we mean...

Everyone has access to opportunities to learn, grow and progress through meaningful work, stretch experiences and the right support.

- **I can develop skills as part of my day job**
- **I have opportunities to try new things**
- **I can see how to progress my career**

What will be different

There will be more opportunities to grow skills we need for the future

I'll be able to see clear pathways to develop and progress my career

I'll build skills and gain experience through my day to day work, not just 'one off' training

What we'll focus on...

1

Plan and grow our workforce for the future

- We will strengthen our approach to **workforce planning** , helping services to plan ahead for key roles and future needs.
- Through our talent strategy we will grow our approach to apprentices and trainees and contining to develop early careers pipeline

2

Making learning part of every day work

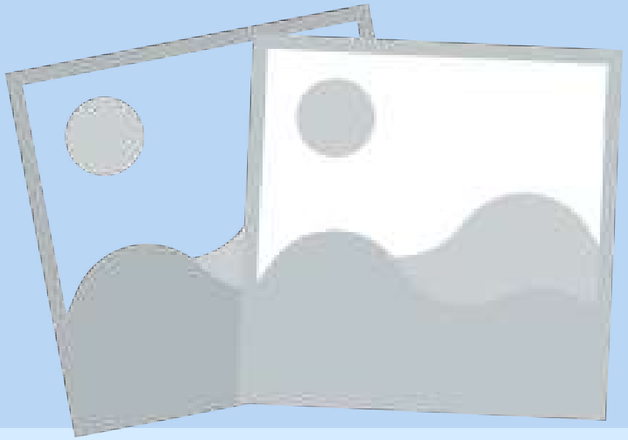
- Through our Talent Strategy, we will create more chances to **learn on the job** - like shadowing, internal development opportunities and working in different teams - so you can build your skills and experience
- We'll make learning easier to access and relevant to your role, at the right time

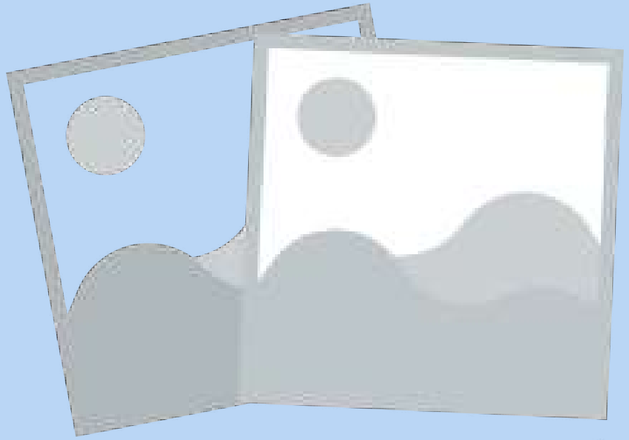
3

Develop skills for the future

- We'll focus on building the digital, data and leadership skills we need for the future.
- We'll also strengthen our service design and relational practice skills, so we can deliver better outcomes for residents.

Innovation





Images to follow

What we mean...

Innovation is about confidence, trust and permission to improve how we work.

- I can share ideas and try new things out
- It's okay to learn from what doesn't work
- I can work across teams and solve problems

Innovation

What will be different

I'll work more closely with colleagues across teams to solve problems

I'll feel more confident to share ideas, try new things and learn from experience

I'll have better tools and confidence to use digital, data and AI in my work

What we'll focus on...

1

Continue to build a safe and supportive environment to try new things

- We'll continue to build a culture where people feel confident to speak up, share ideas and try new ways of working.
- Learning from what doesn't work will be encouraged, helping people use their judgement and grow from experience

2

Build digital, data and AI confidence and capability

- We will support a digitally confident workforce through building confidence in digital, data and AI, with practical learning that can be used in day to day work.
- Through opportunities like Digital Sparks and our Digital and Data Academy, we will help our people to work smarter, use information more effectively and reduce unncessary effort.

3

Working together to solve problems

- We will make it easier to work together across services to solve problems.
- Working and thinking as 'One Council' will become the norm with more opportunities to collaborate.
- There will be more opportunities to be involved in change from the start

Staff Forum

STAFF SURVEY

INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Positive Work Environment

WIRRAL

What we mean...

Inclusive workplaces where everyone has a voice and belongs.

- My voice is heard and valued
- Issues are dealt with early and fairly
- I feel cared for and my wellbeing is supported
- I belong and feel part of this organisation

Positive Work Environment

What will be different...

I'll have more opportunities to shape decisions that affect my work

I feel confident speaking up and know I'll be listened to

We focus more on relationships, with issues being picked up and resolved early on

Support for wellbeing will feel consistent, wherever I work

What we'll focus on...

1

Continue to listen, involve and codesign

- We'll continue to listen to our people and involve them in shaping how we work.
- Through staff surveys, forums and networks we'll continue to create meaningful opportunities for colleagues to share their views, lived experience and codesign people practices and policies that affect them.

2

Dealing with issues early and fairly

- We'll focus on honest conversations, fixing problems together and building trust, rather than relying on formal processes where we don't need to.

3

Looking after our wellbeing together

- Through our wellbeing strategy, Managers will be supported to have confident, every day conversations about wellbeing.
- You'll feel supported to take care of your own wellbeing and be yourself at work
- Wellbeing support will be consistent wherever you work

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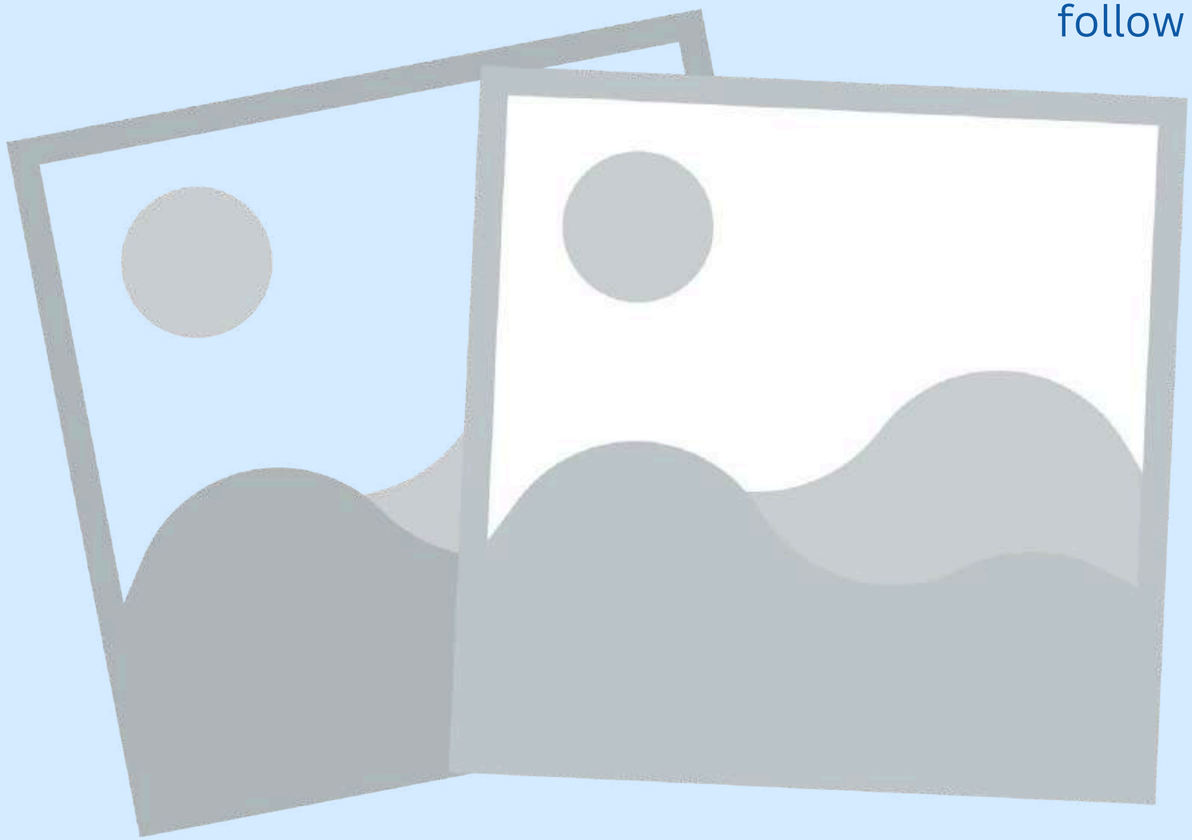


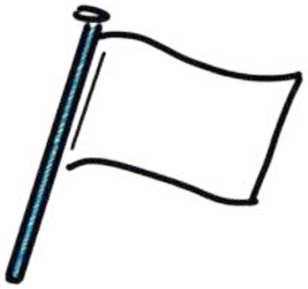
Good Leadership and Management

Good Leadership and Management

What we mean...

Good leadership and management at Wirral is about doing the right things, in the right way, for the right reasons - bringing out the best in ourselves and others to deliver better outcomes for Wirral.

- I know what is expected of me
- My manager supports and trusts me
- I have clear direction during change



What will be different...

I'll understand what good leadership looks like at every level

I'll have clearer, more consistent updates about change

I'll feel more confident about what change means for me

We will prioritise

1

Supporting managers to lead well every day

- We'll give managers the practical tools and development they need to build high trust teams where people can speak up and do their best work.

2

Clear expectations and good leadership at every level

- We'll be clear about what good leadership looks like at every level
- We'll recognise and reinforce the behaviours that matter most
- We'll develop our current and future leaders and managers

3

Build leadership capability to lead well through change

- We will strengthen capability in change leadership, storytelling and community focused practice.
- We'll support leaders to provide clarity, direction and reassurance during change, creating a consistent experience across the organisation

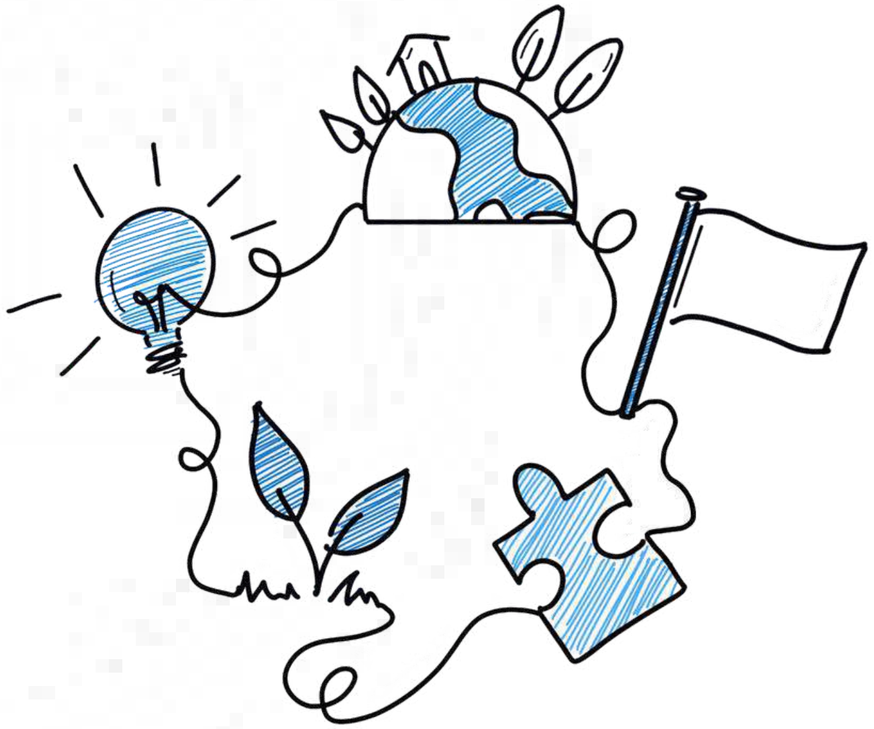
We are Wirral | What we'll measure

Our People Strategy helps us to create the conditions for people to perform at their best and deliver great ouotcomes for residents.

These 5 people strategy themes are what we'll measure in our each year through our staff survey. This will help us to understand what is improving and where we need to focus next.

Our 5 themes are:

- **Meaningful Work**
- **Great Growth Opportunities**
- **Innovation**
- **Positive Work Environment**
- **Leadership & People Management**



Wirral Conversation Themes

Feedback included in this report was collected from 16 March to 13 May 2026.

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1.0 Executive Summary

In Wirral Council we are starting a new chapter in how we work with residents and staff.

We started the Wirral Conversation in March 2026 and whilst information has been collated, we expect the conversation to continue over future months and years. This is not about a survey, but about real listening, rebuilding trust and developing a new relationship that will underpin how we deliver services in the future. Of course, these changes don't happen quickly, but we need to start somewhere.

Conversations were held with residents across Wirral in 13 wards, and with staff in our main offices, depot and park. This paper presents the themes that were discussed. Inevitably some feedback is uncomfortable, and it's important we learn from these views. The themes and views have already been shared with colleagues working on change plans and have informed the new *Wirral Plan 2027-31* and *Making a difference for Wirral* target operating model.

1.1 What we heard

- People want the Council to protect important services and support those who need help most, including through social care, children's services, SEND support and early help.
- Residents said everyday services matter: clean streets, reliable waste collection, well-maintained roads, parks and public spaces.
- People want clearer information, quicker responses, and confidence that the Council listens and follows through.
- Many people supported services being closer to communities, including community hubs, one stop shops, libraries and places where residents can speak to someone face to face.
- Residents and staff valued local groups, volunteers and community activity. They also wanted the Council to make it easier for communities and services to work together.
- People said earlier support is important, especially around mental health, families, young people, financial pressures and preventing problems from getting worse.
- On growth and jobs, people talked about town centres, local businesses, affordable access, skills, apprenticeships, good jobs and visible regeneration.
- Some feedback was critical. People raised concerns about financial management, outsourcing, waste, parking, traffic schemes and the pace of regeneration. These views are included because they are part of what people told us.

2.0 How we listened

The Conversation is part of an ongoing effort to listen to residents and staff. It was designed to create open conversations, not to produce a statistically representative survey. This report should therefore be read as a summary of what people chose to tell us during this period.

2.1 Conversation Approach

We invited people to talk about five key areas:

- **Like other areas, Wirral must find new ways to deliver services with less money.** What are your top priorities? What might be stopped?
- **Services will be delivered closer to home in neighbourhoods and hubs.** How can we work differently to help communities? What's working well?
- **There will be more help to support people earlier.** How can we help people to deal with the challenges they face earlier? How would you like to access help in the community?
- **Everyday services such as the bins, roads, street cleaning and parks are really important to residents.** What are the most important things for us to get right? Are there better ways to deliver these services?
- **We want to grow Wirral's economy and create more jobs for Wirral residents.** What will improve Wirral's economy? What will improve jobs?

People were not limited to these questions. Residents and staff could raise any issue that mattered to them and could explain their ideas or concerns in their own words.

The Conversation included in-person events with the public, sessions with Council staff, and an online option.

2.2 In Person Conversations

2.2.1 Conversations with the Public

Events were held across Wirral in a range of places, including shopping areas, libraries, churches and supermarkets. The aim was to meet people where they already were and to hear from a wide range of voices. The public events are listed in Appendix 1.

Officers and Councillors took notes during the conversations. Because the conversations were informal and often happened in busy public places, the number of people spoken to was not recorded.

2.2.1 Conversations with Council Staff

Staff conversation events were held in different Council workplaces, including Mallory, the Floral Pavilion, Prenton Depot and Birkenhead Park Visitor Centre. An online staff session was also held. Notes were taken and brought together with the wider feedback.

2.3 Online Conversations

An online version of the Conversation was available through the Council's Have Your Say consultation portal. This gave residents, stakeholders and staff another way to share their views. People could choose whether to provide their postcode, so not all online responses included location information.

2.4 Feedback Analysis

Feedback from in-person and online conversations was brought together and reviewed by theme.

An AI tool was used to help organise free-text feedback. Officers reviewed and checked the themes to make sure they reflected the comments received.

This report presents the main themes in plain language. It does not treat the feedback as a vote or ranking exercise.

2.5 Communication

The Conversation was promoted through the council's corporate digital communication channels. This included:

- Social media content was shared through the Council's main channels.
- A media release was issued to local media.
- An article was published through Wirral View.
- Information was shared through resident email updates.

3.0 What people told us

This section summarises what residents and staff told us across the five conversation topics.

3.1 Like other areas, Wirral must find new ways to deliver services with less money

What are your top priorities?

Social Care and Support for Vulnerable Groups	Protecting and improving adult social care, services for the elderly, children, and those with disabilities or SEND is a consistent priority.
Waste and Street Cleanliness	Regular bin collections, street cleaning, tackling fly-tipping, and maintaining public spaces are seen as essential for community pride and public health.
Roads and Infrastructure	Maintenance and improvement of roads, pavements, potholes, and drainage are repeatedly cited as top priorities, with calls for better quality repairs and more regular upkeep.
Community Engagement and Communication	Residents want more meaningful consultation, better communication, face-to-face service options, and genuine involvement in decision-making.
Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime	Addressing anti-social behaviour, increasing police presence, and cracking down on crime (including environmental crime) are concerns for residents.

What might be stopped?

Financial Management and Accountability	There is criticism of council financial mismanagement, executive pay, wasteful spending, and a demand for greater transparency and value for money.
Stopping Non-Essential or Unpopular Projects	Some want to halt spending on perceived vanity projects, underused cycle lanes, excessive consultations, and initiatives lacking broad community support.
Parking and Traffic Management	Parking charges, enforcement, and traffic schemes (especially 20mph zones and cycle lanes) are contentious, with some calling for reductions or removals to support local business and ease congestion.
Council Structure and Staffing	Suggestions include reducing the number of councillors, cutting senior management, merging or streamlining departments, and improving staff performance and training.
Regeneration and Economic Development	Revitalising town centres (especially Birkenhead), supporting local businesses, and attracting tourism are seen as key to Wirral's future prosperity.

3.2 Services will be delivered closer to home in neighbourhoods and hubs

How can we work differently to help communities?

Local Activities and Social Infrastructure	Recognition of the value of local activities, parks, libraries, leisure centres, and community events in building wellbeing, social cohesion, and pride in place.
Empowerment and Community-Led Action	Support for empowering residents and local groups to take more responsibility, lead initiatives, and be involved in shaping and delivering services.
Communication	Calls for clearer, more transparent, and earlier communication with residents, including better advertising of services and more face-to-face opportunities.
Community Hubs and One Stop Shops	support for accessible, multi-service community hubs and the return or expansion of One Stop Shops, especially in libraries and local centres, to provide a range of services under one roof.
Accessibility and Inclusion	Emphasis on making services accessible to all, including those who are not digitally savvy, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those in all geographic areas, not just the most deprived.

What's working well?

Local Activities and Social Infrastructure	Recognition of the value of local activities, parks, libraries, leisure centres, and community events in building wellbeing, social cohesion, and pride in place.
Empowerment and Community-Led Action	Support for empowering residents and local groups to take more responsibility, lead initiatives, and be involved in shaping and delivering services.
Community Hubs and One Stop Shops	Support for accessible, multi-service community hubs and the return or expansion of One Stop Shops, especially in libraries and local centres, to provide a range of services under one roof.
Environmental Maintenance and Cleanliness	Requests for better street cleaning, road repairs, litter management, and maintenance of public spaces, with some support for community involvement in these efforts.

3.3 There will be more help to support people earlier

How can we help people to deal with the challenges they face earlier?

Mental Health Support	Repeated calls for more accessible, walk-in mental health services and early intervention to address rising mental health needs.
Youth and Family Services	Calls for more youth activities, early years support, SEND provision, and family hubs to help children and families thrive.
Early Intervention and Prevention	Support for investing in early help and preventative services to address issues before they escalate, reducing long-term costs and harm.
Financial and Cost-of-Living Support	Requests for easier access to financial help, council tax support, food, and energy assistance, especially for low-income and working families.
Promotion of Wellbeing and Healthy Lifestyles	Suggestions to invest in leisure, green spaces, and wellbeing activities as preventative measures to improve quality of life and resilience.

How would you like to access help in the community?

Community Hubs and One Stop Shops	Demand for reopening or expanding local community hubs and one stop shops to provide face-to-face, multi-service support accessible to all residents.
Face-to-Face and Human Contact	Emphasis on the value of in-person support, especially for the elderly, digitally excluded, and those uncomfortable with online systems.
Trust	Responsiveness, and Accountability, Frustration with slow, generic, or unhelpful council responses; desire for staff to be approachable, knowledgeable, and accountable.
Improved Communication and Information	Calls for clearer, more proactive communication about available services, eligibility, and changes, using multiple channels to reach all demographics.

3.4 Everyday services such as the bins, roads, street cleaning and parks are really important to residents

What are the most important things for us to get right?

Street Cleaning	Calls for more frequent and thorough street cleaning, especially in litter-prone areas, and better maintenance of public spaces.
Parks and Green Spaces	Value placed on well-maintained parks, with requests for improved facilities, more rangers, and better access for all residents.
Road Maintenance	Concerns about potholes, poor repairs, and the need for long-lasting, high-quality road resurfacing rather than temporary fixes.
Littering and Fly-Tipping	Concerns about increasing litter, overflowing bins, and fly-tipping, with calls for stricter enforcement and community involvement in clean-ups.
Bin Collection	General satisfaction with regular bin collections but frustration with missed collections, overflowing bins, and inconsistent service in some areas.

Are there better ways to deliver these services?

Communication and Accessibility	Frustration with poor council communication, outdated digital systems, and difficulty contacting the council or getting timely responses.
Contracting vs. In-House Services	Criticism of outsourcing to private contractors, with some advocating for bringing services back in-house for better accountability and value.
Value for Money and Financial Management	Demand for better use of council tax, transparency in spending, and ending perceived waste on unnecessary projects.
Accountability and Performance Monitoring	Calls for clearer performance targets, regular audits, and holding both contractors and council staff accountable for service delivery.
Community Engagement and Volunteering	Recognition of the role of volunteers and local groups in maintaining parks and cleanliness, with calls for more support and collaboration.

3.5 We want to grow Wirral's economy and create more jobs for Wirral residents

What will improve Wirral's economy?

Town Centre Regeneration	Repeated concerns about neglected town centres, especially Birkenhead, with calls for faster, more visible regeneration, new leisure and hospitality venues, and a clear delivery plan to attract visitors and investment.
Support for Local Businesses	Emphasis on reducing business rates, rents, and red tape, alongside providing grants, advice, and practical support to help small and independent businesses start, survive, and expand.
Parking Charges and Accessibility	Calls to remove or reduce parking charges, with some linking free or affordable parking to increased footfall, thriving streets, and business growth.
Community Pride and Public Realm	Calls to keep towns clean, safe, and attractive, invest in public spaces, and foster civic pride to make Wirral a desirable place to live, work, and do business.
Transport and Connectivity	Calls for improved, affordable, and reliable public transport, better road infrastructure, and joined-up cycling and walking routes to connect communities with jobs and services.

What will improve jobs?

Inclusive Economic Growth	Emphasis on creating quality, well-paid jobs for all residents, supporting those on low incomes, and ensuring opportunities for young people, older workers, and underrepresented groups.
Skills	Apprenticeships, and Training, Advocacy for more apprenticeships, upskilling, and career pathways for young people and adults, with closer links between education providers, employers, and local needs.
Industry and Manufacturing	Nostalgia for lost manufacturing and shipbuilding jobs, with suggestions to protect and grow existing industry, attract new sectors, and support technical and engineering employment.
Green Economy and Sustainability	Support for investment in green jobs, renewable energy, retrofitting, and sustainable industries, with suggestions for council guidance and dedicated officers to help businesses transition.
Transport and Connectivity	Calls for improved, affordable, and reliable public transport, better road infrastructure, and joined-up cycling and walking routes to connect communities with jobs and services.

Appendix 1: In Person Public Events

Ward	Venue	Date/Time
Bebington	Outside Shops on Teehey Lane	13th April 09:00-10:00
Bidston & St James	Social Supermarket, Gautby Road Community Shop Beechwood	14th April 16:30 22nd April 14:00-16:00
Birkenhead & Tranmere	Outside TJ Hughes, Precinct Birkenhead and Outside Waterstones, Grange Rd	31st March 12:00, 1st April 12:00, 7th April 12:00 8th April 12:00, 14th April 12:00, 15th March 12:00
Bromborough	Taking Strides, 35 Allport Lane, CH62 7HH	7th April 10:00-13:00
Clatterbridge	Thornton Hough WI	15th April Evening
Eastham	Eastham Library	17th April 09:30-11:30
Greasby, Frankby & Irby	St Chads Church Warm Hub, Irby Greasby Library and Irby Village shops	31st March 10:00 27th April 10:00
Heswall	Lighthouse Church, Telegraph Rd	28th April 17:30-20:30
Liscard	Cherry Tree shopping centre	30th March 12:00-14:00
Oxton	Sainsbury's, Woodchurch Rd with Prenton Councillors	30th March 09:30-11:30
Prenton	Outside Sainsbury's, Woodchurch Rd	30th March 09:30-11:30
Wallasey	New Hope Wirral CIC, Egremont, Wallasey	21st April 13:00-13:45
West Kirby & Thurstaston	West Kirby Library	10th April 10.00-12.00

MINUTE EXTRACT

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 22nd July 2026

29 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 (2026/27)**

The Director of Finance introduced a report which provided an update on the Capital Programme as at the 30 June 2026. It recommended that the Committee agreed the revised 2026/27 Capital Programme of £122.920 million, which took account of re-profiling, virements, additional funding requirements and grant variations.

During discussion, members sought clarification on capital allocations, including the removal of funding for parking payment machines and proposed investment in Eastham Day Centre.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council the approval of:

1. **the revised Capital Programme of £122.920 million for 2026/27.**

2. **additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.8 of the report.**

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WIRRAL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 July 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**2026-27 CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1**
REPORT OF:	**DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Capital Programme as at the 30 June 2026. It recommends that this Committee agrees the revised 2026/27 Capital Programme of £122.920 million, which takes account of re-profiling, virements, additional funding requirements and grant variations.

The report supports the delivery of the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023/27 specifically in terms of the Efficient, Effective and Accessible Council theme. The Capital Programme also contributes towards projects that support all five Council Plan delivery themes.

This matter is a key decision which affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee is requested to recommend to Council the approval of:

1 the revised Capital Programme of £122.920 million for 2026/27.

2 additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.8 of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 Regular monitoring and reporting of the Capital Programme enable decisions to be taken in a timely manner, which may produce revenue benefits and will improve financial control in Wirral Borough Council.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Other reporting frequencies could be considered, but quarterly reporting is a standard practice.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Tables 1 and 2 provide an update on the 2026/27 Capital Programme analysed on a Directorate and then Committee basis. A number of variations have arisen since the original Programme was agreed in March 2026. These include the reprofiling of expenditure into and out of financial years and the inclusion of additional grant funding. Appendix A of this report provides further analysis of the movement of the forecast programme across directorates during the year to date.

Table 1: Capital Programme 2026/27 Position by Directorate

Programme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £m	Budget 30 Jun 26 £m	Variance £m	Actuals 30 Jun 26 £m
Adult Care & Health	0.609	0.609	0.000	0.032
Children, Families & Education	17.089	10.589	-6.500	1.986
Finance	12.577	11.077	-1.500	0.019
Neighbourhoods	49.173	40.177	-8.996	1.761
Regeneration & Place	93.058	60.468	-32.590	6.837
Total	**172.506**	**122.920**	**-49.586**	**10.634**

Table 2: Capital Programme 2026/27 Position by Committee

Programme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £m	Budget 30 Jun 26 £m	Variance £m	Actuals 30 Jun 26 £m
Adult Social Care & Health	0.609	0.609	0.000	0.032
Children, Young People & Education	17.089	10.589	-6.500	1.986
Economy, Regeneration & Housing	89.104	57.444	-31.660	6.792
Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport	52.686	42.760	-9.926	1.749
Policy & Resources	12.577	11.077	-1.500	0.019
Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure	0.441	0.441	0.000	0.057
Total	**172.506**	**122.920**	**-49.586**	**10.634**

3.1.2 As noted above, the main movements in this year's Programme are in respect of reprofiling of budget into future years along with the inclusion of new funding and schemes into the Programme. A full breakdown can be found in Appendix A.

3.1.3 Such re-profiling reduces the borrowing costs incurred during the year (2026/27) and also delays the resultant Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges into future years. Any delay in outputs will be monitored by project managers and practical implications reported to the appropriate committee.

3.2 Reprofiling of expenditure

3.2.1 Regular meetings are held with officers who are responsible for capital projects contained within the Programme. During these meetings assessments are made regarding the deliverability of the schemes and their budgetary requirement for the year. These assessments are reflected in the forecast Capital outturn provided through the quarterly update reports to Members. Should it be assessed that a scheme will continue into the next financial year, or beyond, budget is reprofiled as deemed appropriate at that time.

3.2.2 A scheme should not be paused or deferred into a future year if this action were to lead to avoidable detrimental effects on the Council. The project lead officers determine if a scheme is appropriate for reprofiling and manage any risks or negative impacts associated with this decision. Schemes that are part or fully funded from grant require additional consideration before reprofiling, so as not to compromise the conditions of the grant agreements, which may jeopardise the scheme funding.

3.2.3 Within Quarter 1 several schemes had funding reprofiled to reflect project delivery expectations for this financial year, with the majority of schemes changes profiled into 2027/28. Should a scheme encounter a significant change then the future options for that scheme will be reported via the relevant committee and subject to the appropriate governance routes for ratification.

3.3 Scheme Updates

3.3.1 Schemes are subject to an ongoing review to ensure that a deliverable programme is in place, that they are compatible with the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023/27 priorities and to try and identify any savings. Current progress on the more significant schemes is provided in Appendix G of this report.

3.3.2 Scheme costs are continually monitored by project officers. Due to inflationary pressures within the economy, financial monitoring of schemes is of utmost importance to identify any potential budgetary issues that may arise such as an increase in the cost of building materials. Any such pressures that are identified will be reported that may affect the delivery of a scheme. It will then be determined as to whether the scheme must apply for additional funding to complete the project, or whether the scheme becomes no longer viable from a financial perspective. Similarly, should a contractor become insolvent in the current financial climate, a decision will need to be taken regarding the future of the scheme.

3.4 Grant Funded Schemes

3.4.1 There has been one grant awarded during Quarter 1 relating to the Capital Programme.

3.4.2 **Aids, Adaptations and Disabled Facility Grant – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – £6.071 million - Regeneration & Place**

This is the 2026/27 confirmed allocation however, £5.100 million is already in the program as pipeline funding.

3.5 Virements

There have been no virements this Quarter.

3.6 Capital Funding Requirements

3.6.1 The Capital Programme is funded by the following means:

Table 3 Financing the Capital Programme 2026/27

Source of Financing	Budget 1 Apr 26 £m	Budget 30 Jun 26 £m	Variance £m
Borrowing	71.722	53.511	-18.211
Grants/Contributions	92.243	62.368	-29.875
Capital Receipts	7.443	5.943	-1.500
Revenue/ Reserves	1.098	1.098	0.000
Total	**172.506**	**122.920**	**-49.586**

3.6.2 Any re-profiling that reduces borrowing will produce a deferral of revenue spending. A permanent saving only occurs if schemes cease, otherwise the full budget will be required in the year when the re-profiled expenditure is incurred.

3.6.3 The reprofiling of grant funding is actioned in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant and does not mean a loss or reduction of that grant.

3.7 Capital Receipts

3.7.1 Appendix C to this report lists the capital receipts received to date in 2026/27.

3.8 Recommendations to Full Council: Approval for Funding

3.8.1 Below is a summary of the capital bids seeking approval in Quarter 1 for funding via this report. Further detail is provided in Appendix B to this report. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) will be followed, should any of the capital programmes mentioned within the report be required to procure.

3.8.2 **Eastham Day Care Centre - Funding Required £0.320 million – Regeneration & Place -** Enabling provision in Eastham is key to achieving the redesign and transformation of day services.

3.8.3 **Cremated Remains Section at Landican & Wallasey Cemeteries - Required £0.075 million – Neighbourhoods –** extension to the current provision of dedicated

Cremated Remains Sections within Landican Cemetery and Wallasey (Rake Lane) Cemetery.

3.9 Other Scheme Matters

3.9.1 **Regeneration Delivery Support - £2.7000 million** – In March 2024, this Committee approved £2.7000 million to strengthen capacity across regeneration programmes, primarily linked to the Simplification Pathfinder Pilot (now the Local Regeneration Fund), with funding proposed to align to the extended grant deadline of March 2028. The investment has supported fixed-term internal roles and specialist external expertise essential for delivering priorities within the Birkenhead 2040 Framework – including work in Seacombe, Liscard and New Ferry – while addressing delays in recruitment by extending key roles until March 2027 to ensure adequate capacity for programme development, delivery, grant compliance, and pipeline preparation. The funding has enabled project management, grants management, procurement, communications support, and access to technical disciplines such as development appraisal, contract management, surveying, and specialist consultancy across major schemes including Hind Street, Birkenhead Waterfront, Wallasey Town Hall Annexes, and borough-wide place marketing, operation within an Intelligent Client model to bridge skills gaps and support effective programme delivery. Spend has been £0.600 million per year, £0.300 million supporting revenue (using the Wirral Growth Company reserve) and £0.300 million allocated to the schemes mentioned. It is forecast this level of spend will continue over the next two financial years that will see the full £2.700 million being used in support of the regeneration programme.

3.9.2 **PSDS Decarbonisation Scheme –** The LCRCA grant funding of £13.757m has been removed from the programme, this is not because the funding has been withdrawn from the scheme but because the Council will not physically receive the grant instead the LCRCA will deal with the funding and expenditure. The £2.361m that remains visible in the Council's programme is for the participant contribution that the LCRCA will invoice the Council for accordingly.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council has systems for reporting and forecasting budgets in place and alongside formal quarterly reporting to Committee. The financial position is regularly reviewed at each Directorate Management Team and corporately at the Change Advisory Board (CAB).

4.2 The Capital Programme can be funded via a number of sources including Council borrowing, capital receipts, grants and revenue contributions. Where the Council finances capital expenditure by borrowing, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The Council estimates requiring borrowing of £53.511 million this year to finance the capital schemes covered by this report. This debt will be repaid via charges to the revenue budget over the lives of the assets created or enhanced (the maximum asset life the Council is permitted to use for this repayment is 50 years). The additional revenue impact repaying the £53.511 million of borrowing required to finance works in 2026/27 is as set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Estimated Charges to Revenue Relating to 2026/27 Debt Funded Capital

	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m	2031/32 £m	2032/33 £m
MRP Cost	-	2.548	2.684	2.828	2.979	2.786	2.698
Interest Estimate*	1.204	2.408	2.408	2.408	2.408	2.408	2.408
Total Cost	**1.204**	**4.956**	**5.092**	**5.236**	**5.387**	**5.194**	**5.106**

Notes

- MRP repayments (principal repayments) from revenue only start the year after the capital expenditure has taken place i.e., for spend incurred in 2026/27, the first MRP repayments will be charged in the 2027/28 revenue accounts.

- The additional MRP costs to revenue in Table 4 are not cumulative, rather an annual comparison to the current MRP charges to be incurred.

- Interest costs are estimated, based on a forecast average rate of borrowing for the period covered in Table 4. This is for indicative purposes only, the actual rate of borrowing over the course of the time period will be determined by cashflow requirements and market conditions at that time. The £2.408 million estimated interest cost from 2027/28 included in Table 4 relates solely to the £53.511 million of borrowing to fund 2026/27 expenditure.

4.3 It is estimated that these MRP costs will peak in 2034/35 at £2.972 million reflecting the fact that the principal repayment associated with debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision) increases over the expected life of the asset funded from borrowing. This repayment profile is due to the Council adopting the “Annuity Method” of repayment which was agreed by Council (on 19 December 2016). The “Annuity Method” produces a profile of principal repayments which starts low and increases each year reflecting the time value of money i.e., £1 in year 1 will have more purchasing power than £1 in year 10.

4.4 The information within Table 4 shows the projected impact of the 2026/27 Capital financing on the revenue budget over future years. For context, Table 5 below shows the total projected level of MRP payments that will fall due over the medium term. This encompasses the repayment of historic capital borrowing, along with the borrowing forecast to be taken out over the Capital programme shown in this report.

Table 5: Projected MRP Charges to Revenue Relating to Debt Funded Capital

	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m	2031/32 £m	2032/33 £m
MRP Cost (26/27 Borrowing)	-	2.548	2.684	2.828	2.979	2.786	2.698
MRP Cost (Future Borrowing)	-	-	0.284	0.319	0.370	0.393	0.418
MRP Cost (Historic Borrowing)	9.074	9.195	9.338	11.561	11.257	10.834	10.348
Total MRP Cost	**9.074**	**11.743**	**12.306**	**14.709**	**14.606**	**14.013**	**13.464**

4.5 Any reprofiling or 'slippage' of debt funded capital spend will delay the associated MRP being charged to the revenue budget. Future year's MRP is included within the rolling Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

4.6 The full revised Capital Programme can be found in Appendix E to this report, with an Indicative future programme shown in Appendix F.

4.7 Details of the Council's 'Prudential Indicators' are provided in Appendix D.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council must set the budget (of which the Capital Programme is part of) in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

5.2 Members must bear in mind their fiduciary duty to the Council Taxpayers of Wirral. Members must have adequate evidence on which to base their decisions on the level of quality at which services should be provided.

5.3 Where a service is provided pursuant to a statutory duty, it would not be lawful to fail to discharge it properly or abandon it, and where there is discretion as to how it is to be discharged, that discretion should be exercised reasonably.

5.4 The report sets out the relevant considerations for Members to consider during their deliberations and Members are reminded of the need to ignore irrelevant considerations. Members have a duty to seek to ensure that the Council acts lawfully. Members must not come to a decision which no reasonable authority could come to; balancing the nature, quality, and level of services which they consider should be provided, against the costs of providing such services.

5.5 Once a budget is in place, Council has delegated responsibility to the Policy and Services Committees to implement it. The Committees may not act contrary to the

Budget without consent of Council other than in accordance with the Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of the Constitution.

5.6 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered, and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no additional resource requirements arising directly from this report as the Capital Programme is managed internally from within existing directorate structures.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The possibility of failure to deliver the Capital Programme will be mitigated by regular programme review by a senior group of officers, charged with improving performance. Corporate Change Portfolio Board (CCPB) is supported by the Change Advisory Board (CAB), which will provide enhanced Capital Programme review.

7.2 The possible failure to deliver the Revenue Budget is being mitigated by:

(1) Senior Leadership / Directorate Teams regularly reviewing the financial position.
(2) Availability of General Fund Balances; and
(3) Where possible, reprofiling of projected Capital expenditure

7.3 Increased costs to revenue will occur if a capital scheme is not completed, e.g. there is a decision made to not proceed with the project, then any costs that have been incurred and capitalised up to that point will need to be removed from the Council's balance sheet and charged to the revenue budget as abortive costs.

7.4 In terms of individual scheme specific risks, these are identified as part of the original business case application and any potential risks to deliverability should be flagged as part of the ongoing scheme review process. The risk of Grant Conditions not being met will be considered as per 3.2.2.

7.5 Within the reviews undertaken by the CAB, schemes which encounter difficulties or additional delivery risk will be subject to additional scrutiny and where necessary, escalation to the CCPB.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 This is an in-year report. Consultation takes places as part of considering the Capital Programme and over the planning and implementation of the specific schemes within the Programme.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is a particular requirement to take into consideration the Council's fiduciary duty and the public sector equality duty in coming to its decision.

9.2 Any decision made in the exercise of any function is potentially open to challenge if the duty has been disregarded. The duty applies both to Full Council when setting the budget and to Committees when considering particular decisions.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Capital bids are welcomed that support the Council's Climate Emergency Plan that was compiled following the declaration of a Climate Emergency by the Council in May 2019. Within the existing Capital Programme there are projects that positively contribute to environmental issues. The environmental and climate implications, both positive and negative, are reported for each scheme separately to the relevant Policy and Service Committee.

10.2 The Programme also includes projects that focus on environmental initiatives such as energy efficient buildings, sustainable and green travel infrastructure, energy efficient street lighting.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Community Wealth Building Strategy is a key part of how the Authority will tackle economic, social and health inequalities across the borough and make a major contribution to improving the economic, social and health outcomes on the Wirral. Schemes contained within the Capital Programme include several regeneration projects that look to improve the economic outlook for the borough, including job creation, training facilities and enhanced transport links. The Community Wealth Building implications are reported for each scheme separately to the relevant policy and service committee.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report. Any schemes included in the future will report directly to the relevant service committee.

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Senior Finance Business Partner

APPENDICES

Appendix A Capital Programme Movements
Appendix B Capital Bid Seeking Approval for funding
Appendix C Capital Receipts Generated 2026/27
Appendix D Prudential Indicators 2026/27
Appendix E Revised Capital Programme 2026/27
Appendix F Future Activity
Appendix G Scheme Updates

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2021/22.
Local Government Act 2003 and subsequent amendments.
Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations 2008.
Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with 1.2(a)(i) of the Policy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference:

Formulate, co-ordinate and implement corporate policies and strategies and the medium-term financial plan (budget), which includes responsibility for any decision:
(i) that relates to such matters to the extent that they are not reserved to Full Council.

Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to refer the decision to Council in accordance with 2(a)(i)(1) of the Functions Reserved to Council:
The Council reserves to itself the following functions (in accordance with the rules and procedures contained in this Constitution):

(i) The Budget – The approval or adoption of a plan or strategy for the control of the local authority's borrowing, investments, or capital expenditure or for determining the authority's minimum revenue provision, which includes the overarching annual: -

(1) Capital Programme
(2) Capital Financing Strategy

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council – 2023/24 Capital Monitoring Quarter 1	9 October 2023
Council – 2023/24 Capital Monitoring Quarter 2	4 December 2023
Council – 2023/24 Capital Monitoring Quarter 3	26 February 2024
Council – 2023/24 Capital Outturn Report	17 July 2024
Council – 2024/29 Capital Programme	26 February 2024
Council – 2024/29 Capital Financing Strategy	26 February 2024
Council – 2024/25 Capital Monitoring Quarter 1	17 July 2024
Council – 2024/25 Capital Monitoring Quarter 2	2 December 2024
Council – 2024/25 Capital Monitoring Quarter 3	3 March 2025
Council – 2024/25 Capital Outturn Report	21 July 2025
Council – 2025/32 Capital Programme	3 March 2025
Council – 2025/32 Capital Financing Strategy	3 March 2025
Council – 2025/26 Capital Monitoring Quarter 1	23 July 2025
Council – 2025/26 Capital Monitoring Quarter 2	19 December 2025
Council – 2025/26 Capital Monitoring Quarter 3	23 February 2026
Council – 2025/26 Capital Outturn Report	10 June 2026

Appendix A

Capital Programme Movements

Table A1: Movement Between Opening Budget on 1 April 2026 and Quarter 1 Forecast Position

Programme	Budget 1 April 26 £m	Additional Grant / Contributions £m	Funding Adjustments (Inc Virements) £m	New Bids £m	Scheme Reduction £m	Reprofiling to Future Years £m	Forecast Q1 £m
Adult Care & Health	0.609	-	-	-	-	-	0.609
Children, Families & Education	17.089	-	-	-	-	-6.500	10.589
Finance	12.577	-	-	-	-	-1.500	11.077
Neighbourhoods	49.173	-	-	0.075	-8.750	-0.321	40.177
Regeneration & Place	93.058	6.730	-	0.320	-5.100	-34.540	60.468
Total	**172.506**	**6.730**	**0.000**	**0.395**	**-13.850**	**-42.861**	**122.920**

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Appendix B

Capital Bid Seeking Approval for Funding

B1 **Eastham Day Care Centre - Funding Required £0.320 million – Regeneration & Place**

The Council's Adult Social Care provides day service support for 347 people with an assessed need under the Care Act 2014. Of the 347 people accessing the service, approx. 124 adults who have a diagnosis of a profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD) or high complex needs are currently accessing the service. Of these 124, 109 attend an asset-based service, 15 attend one of the vocational day experiences.

The Council currently only has Pensby Wood Day Centre, located on Somerset Road in Pensby, Wirral, which is a specialist, purpose-built facility that focuses on providing high-quality care for adults PMLD. The daily capacity at this centre is 30. Currently the centre has 35 registered individuals, highest daily attendance is 29 in the building at any one time.

The remaining 89 people with PMLD or high complex needs are supported across the day service portfolio. 74 of the 89 are within asset-based service which is not fit for their care and support needs.

As part of the redesign and transformation of day services, the best approach involves a blend of traditional and modern services, with a focus on the needs of the people, both more intensive support, due to physical needs and strengthening a person-centred service that empowers people in our care to live fulfilling lives within their communities. Enabling provision in Eastham is key to achieving the redesign and transformation of day services. Eastham is best able to do this due to its size in comparison to other day centre assets.

B2 **Cremated Remains Section at Landican & Wallasey Cemeteries - Required £.075 million - Neighbourhoods**

Capital investment is sought to extend the current provision of dedicated Cremated Remains Sections within Landican Cemetery and Wallasey (Rake Lane) Cemetery. These new sections will increase capacity for cremated remains interment, address growing public demand for dignified memorial spaces, and create a sustainable and high-quality offer aligned with national bereavement trends. The borrowing will be paid back from increased income generated.

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Appendix C

Capital Receipts Generated 2026/27

Assets Sold:	**Net Receipt £**
Sale of Land adjacent to 127 Kings Drive	3,500
Total Asset Sales	**3,500**

*Old Hall Road – a further £2,910,000 is due during this year

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Appendix D

Prudential Indicators 2026/27

(a) Adoption of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code

This indicator demonstrates that the Authority adopted the principles of best practice.

The Council has previously approved the adoption of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code 2021 Edition.

(b) Capital Expenditure

This indicator is set to ensure that the level of proposed capital expenditure remains within sustainable limits and in particular, to consider the impact on Council Tax.

The first Prudential Indicator shows the actual level of capital expenditure that the Council is forecasting to incur in 2025/26 and the following two years, table D.1 shows the estimates for 2025/26 onwards as per the Quarter 4 2025/26 Capital Monitoring report:

Table D.1: Prudential Indicator: Quarter 4 2025/26 Estimate of Capital Expenditure

	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Actual	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	**£000**
Capital Expenditure	84,922	74,986	172,506	29,949	**362,362**
Total	**84,922**	**74,986**	**172,506**	**29,949**	**362,362**

Table D.2 shows how these figures have evolved, with the programme amendments detailed within this report.

Table D.2: Prudential Indicator: Quarter 1 Estimate of Capital Expenditure

	2025/26 Actual £000	2026/27 Estimate £000	2027/28 Estimate £000	2028/29 Estimate £000	Total £000
Capital Expenditure	74,986	122,920	71,681	5,933	**275,520**
Total	**74,986**	**122,920**	**71,681**	**5,933**	**275,520**

Capital expenditure has or will be funded as follows:

Table D.3: Prudential Indicator: Financing of Capital Expenditure

Capital Financing	2025/26 Actual £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000	Total £000
Capital receipts	3,543	5,943	3,750	1,000	14,236
Grants and Contributions	47,516	62,368	40,391	1,585	151,860
Revenue and Reserves	826	1,098	170	48	2,142
Borrowing	23,100	53,511	27,370	3,300	107,281
Total Funding	**74,986**	**122,920**	**71,681**	**5,933**	**275,520**

(c) Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

Estimates of the Authority's cumulative maximum external borrowing requirement for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 as per Quarter 4 2025/26 Capital Monitoring report are shown in the table below:

Table D.4: Capital Financing Requirement Estimates – Quarter 4 2025/26 Capital Monitoring report

Capital Financing Requirement	31/03/2025 Actual £m	31/03/2026 Actual £m	31/03/2027 Estimate £m	31/03/2028 Estimate £m
General Fund	560.991	568.461	623.203	612.243

Table D.5 shows how these figures have evolved, with the programme amendments detailed within this report.

Table D.5: Capital Financing Requirement Revised Estimates

Capital Financing Requirement	31/03/2026 Actual £m	31/03/2027 Estimate £m	31/03/2028 Estimate £m	31/03/2029 Estimate £m
General Fund	565.087	599.288	603.703	582.922

(d) Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement:

In order to ensure that over the medium-term debt will only be for a capital purpose, the Authority should ensure that debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of Capital Financing Requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years.

Table D.6: Gross Debt and the Revised Capital Financing Requirement Estimates

Debt	31/03/2026 Actual £m	31/03/2027 Estimate £m	31/03/2028 Estimate £m	31/03/2029 Estimate £m
Borrowing (Excluding DSG Deficit)	405.700	440.625	455.882	444.575
PFI liabilities	46.164	39.082	30.892	21.890
Leasing	122.061	118.908	115.886	113.113
Total Debt (Excluding DSG Deficit)	**573.924**	**598.614**	**602.659**	**579.578**
Borrowing in excess of CFR?	**YES**	**NO**	**NO**	**NO**
DSG Deficit	**66.410**	**60.586**	**99.687**	**165.315**
Total Debt (Including DSG Deficit)	**640.335**	**659.200**	**702.346**	**744.893**
Borrowing in excess of CFR?	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**

Note: The table indicates that, taking only capital borrowing into consideration, the Council is not expecting the level of external debt to exceed the CFR. The Council is having to fund a growing problem in the revenue budget relating to the deficit in 'Dedicated Schools Grant' (DSG) funding by borrowing additional money. By the end of 2026/27 this deficit is forecast to be £120 million.
The government announcement of a High Needs Stability Grant, due to be paid in Autumn 2026 and equivalent to 90% of an authority's DSG deficit as at the end of 2025/26, will help reduce the level of external borrowing. However, it will not be sufficient to bring the Council's external debt back below its CFR. With the DSG deficit forecast to continue increasing in 2026/27, external debt is expected to remain above the CFR at the end of 2026/27.

This issue is only expected to grow over coming years and is having a significant impact upon the Treasury Management revenue budget as the additional borrowing incurs additional costs. These additional interest costs are the major reason that the Treasury revenue forecast is an overspend position for 2026/27.

(e) Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

The Operational Boundary for External Debt is based on the Authority's estimate of most likely, i.e., prudent, but not worst-case scenario for external debt. It links directly to the Authority's estimates of capital expenditure, the capital financing requirement and cash flow requirements and is a key management tool for in-year monitoring. Other long-term liabilities relate to the Private Finance Initiative that are not borrowing but form part of the Authority's debt.

The Authorised Limit for External Debt is the affordable borrowing limit determined in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003. It is the maximum amount of debt that the Authority can legally owe. The authorised limit provides headroom over and above the operational boundary for unusual cash movements.

There were no breaches to the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary, as set in the Capital Financing Strategy report (Council meeting 2 March 2026) during Quarter 3 2025/26.

Table D.7: Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

	Operational Boundary 2026/27 £m	Authorised Limit 2026/27 £m	External Debt 31/5/2026 £m
Borrowing	496.000	506.000	457.230
Other Long-term Liabilities	169.000	174.000	168.225
Total	**665.000**	**680.000**	**625.455**

(f) Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

This is an indicator of affordability and highlights the revenue implications of existing and proposed capital expenditure by identifying the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet financing costs. The ratio is based on costs net of investment income.

Table D.8 Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream.

Ratio of Finance Costs to Net Revenue Stream	2026/27 Estimate %	2027/28 Estimate %	2028/29 Estimate %
Ratio	9.888%	10.840%	11.016%

Note: As referenced above, as a consequence of having to fund the growing DSG funding deficit through borrowing, the interest costs of the Council will incur will subsequently increase annually.

Appendix E

Revised Capital Programme at Quarter 1 2026/27

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
Adult Care and Health										
Citizen and Provider Portal/Integrated I.T.	31	31	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
Extra Care Housing	0	0	0	0	0	1,585	0	0	0	0
Telecare & Telehealth Ecosystem	578	578	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Adult Care and Health	**609**	**609**	**0**	**32**	**0**	**1,585**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Children, Families & Education										
Aiming High for Disabled Children	31	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Basic Needs	366	366	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Child Care Capital Expansion Fund	282	282	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Condition/modernisation (SCA)	8,784	3,784	-5,000	264	5,000	0	0	0	0	0
Family Hub Transformation Fund	49	49	0	-5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family support	132	132	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
High Needs Provision Capital	6,476	4,976	-1,500	1,705	1,500	0	0	0	0	0
School Works - Department for Education Ringfenced Receipts	950	950	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transforming Care - Therapeutic Short Breaks	19	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Children, Families & Education	**17,089**	**10,589**	**-6,500**	**1,986**	**6,500**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Finance										
Capitalisation Directive (MHCLG)	5,970	5,970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT Client Refreshment, Laptops, Desktops & Tablets	114	114	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transformational Capitalisation	3,584	3,584	0	0	250	0	0	0	0	0
Transformational Capitalisation - Digital	2,909	1,409	-1,500	3	3,500	1,000	0	0	0	0
Total Finance	**12,577**	**11,077**	**-1,500**	**19**	**3,750**	**1,000**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Neighbourhoods										
Air Quality Control DEFRA	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Allotment & Cemetery Standpipes	255	255	0	86	0	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
Allotment Sites Expansion	150	150	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arrowe Brook Park– Bellway	5	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beechwood Play Area	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bidston Court - Path Improvements	337	337	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Birkenhead Park World Heritage Project Team	68	68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bridges excluding Dock Bridge	958	958	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Car Parking Equipment	1,000	250	-750	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cemetery Extension & Improvements (Frankby)	60	60	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coastal Defence - Meols Feasibility Study	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Combined Authority Transport Plan (CATP)	3,828	3,828	0	337	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coronation Park Sustainable Drainage	197	197	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wall Structures	509	509	0	19	300	0	0	0	0	0
DEFRA -Food Waste Collection Service	4,751	4,751	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dock Bridges replacement	210	210	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Improvements	1,027	1,027	0	407	0	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
Essential H&S Infrastructure Improvements @ Wirral Country Park	26	26	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flaybrick Cemetery Pathway	117	117	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fleet Recovery Vehicle & lift	78	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Future Golf - Project 1.1	244	244	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Golf Course Machinery	272	272	0	135	0	0	0	0	0	0
Highway Maintenance	3,981	3,981	0	143	0	0	0	0	0	0
Introduction of Cremated Remains Section at Landican & Wallasey Cemeteries	0	75	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Highway Maintenance Block Funding 2025-26	0	0	0	53	0	0	0	0	0	0
Key Route Network (LGF3) - Operate Key Roads / Routes Efficiently	165	165	0	242	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kingsmead School - Playing Field S106	351	351	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landican Cemetery Extension of Burial Area & Modernisation of Chapel Complex	389	389	0	71	885	0	0	0	0	0
Leasowe Playing Field & environmental improvements	279	279	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
Levelling Up Parks Fund-Woodchurch	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mayfield Improvements	90	90	0	0	170	48	48	0	0	0
Moreton Sandbrook Drainage	189	189	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parks Machinery	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parks Vehicles	129	129	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parks Workshop & various machinery	101	101	0	85	0	0	0	0	0	0
Play Area Improvements	136	136	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Plymyard Playing Field	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PSDS Decarbonisation Phase 1	9,266	945	-8,321	0	944	472	0	0	0	0
Quick Win Levy	75	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spital Play Area	90	90	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strategic Transport (excl. Birkenhead 2040 Programme)	3,166	3,166	0	109	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surface Water Management Scheme	85	85	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waste Infrastructure	16,150	16,150	0	0	0	0	2,250	0	0	0
Williamson Art Gallery Catalogue	23	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral Country Park - Main Visitor Car Park	273	273	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral Tennis Centre - 3G Pitch	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
Total Neighbourhoods	**49,173**	**40,177**	**-8,996**	**1,758**	**2,299**	**520**	**2,298**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Regeneration & Place										
Aids, Adaptations and Disabled Facility Grants	1,655	7,726	6,071	1,164	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arrowe Country Park Depot: Re-Surfacing, Material Bays & Electronic Entrance Barrier	102	102	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Balls Road Centre	200	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bebington Oval Facility Upgrade	473	473	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Birkenhead Town Centre	14,625	6,000	-8,625	224	8,625	0	0	0	0	0
Birkenhead Waterfront Programme	20,644	10,644	-10,000	160	17,663	0	0	0	0	0
Borough Yard Programme	7,044	7,703	659	158	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business Investment Fund	360	360	0	0	225	0	0	0	0	0
Capitalisation of Regen Salaries	1,518	720	-798	0	798	0	0	0	0	0
Central Birkenhead Programme	12,265	7,000	-5,265	3,093	6,195	0	0	0	0	0
Community Asset Transfer	365	365	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Consolidated Library Works Fund	191	191	0	75	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Housing Acquisitions	0	0	0	0	1,807	2,056	1,453	0	0	0
Demolitions	4,831	831	-4,000	326	5,244	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
District Heat Network Infrastructure	308	308	0	16	69	0	0	0	0	0
Dock Branch Park Programme	852	852	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eastham Day Care Centre	0	320	320	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hamilton Park enabling works - Bhead Regen Delivery	164	164	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Health & Safety - Capital Works	1,091	1,091	0	0	700	772	0	0	0	0
Health & Safety works - The Grange & Pyramids	2,000	2,000	0	0	1,000	0	0	0	0	0
Liscard Town Centre	6,791	1,351	-5,440	0	10,480	0	0	0	0	0
Local Authority Housing Fund 2	1,459	1,459	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moreton Youth Club & Library	923	0	-923	0	923	0	0	0	0	0
Mosslands School - new build & land works	1,636	1,636	0	1,719	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Ferry Projects	6,170	4,170	-2,000	-152	2,000	0	0	0	0	0
Property Pooled Plus I.T System	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Regeneration Delivery Resources	662	512	-150	0	1,100	0	0	0	0	0
Seacombe River Corridor Programme	3,678	2,748	-930	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strategic Acquisitions - Capital Enhancements	1,080	1,080	0	0	500	0	0	0	0	0

Scheme	Budget 1 Apr 26 £000	2026/27 Forecast Q1 £000	Variance £000	Actuals Q1 £000	2027/28 Budget £000	2028/29 Budget £000	2029/30 Budget £000	2030/31 Budget £000	2031/32 Budget £000	2032/33 Budget £000
UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) Capital Projects	25	25	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Kirby Concourse/Guinea Gap Reception upgrade / improve	149	149	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Kirby Marine Lake/Sailing Centre – accommodation	46	46	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Williamson Art Gallery Ventilation	239	239	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral Waters	1,509	0	-1,509	0	1,800	0	0	0	0	0
Total Regeneration & Place	**93,058**	**60,468**	**-32,590**	**6,837**	**59,132**	**2,828**	**1,453**	**0**	**0**	**0**
TOTAL PROGRAMME	**172,506**	**122,920**	**-49,586**	**10,632**	**71,681**	**5,933**	**3,751**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Appendix F

Future Planning

F.1 A Summary of the known, confirmed Capital Programme is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Confirmed Capital Programme at Quarter 1 2026/27

Programme	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m	2031/32 £m	2032/33 £m
Adult Care & Health	0.609	-	1.585	-	-	-	-
Children, Families & Education	10.589	6.500	-	-	-	-	-
Finance	11.077	3.750	1.000	-	-	-	-
Neighbourhoods	40.177	2.299	0.520	2.298	-	-	-
Regeneration & Place	60.468	59.132	2.828	1.453	-	-	-
Total	**122.920**	**71.681**	**5.933**	**3.751**	**-**	**-**	**-**

F.2 The following capital funding assumptions have been factored into the potential programme shown Table 2 below:

- continued grant to be received for Schools Modernisation of £2.500 million per year
- continued grant to be received for Disabled Facilities Grant of £5.100 million per year
- continued grant to be received for Highways of £8.000 million per year (from 28/28 onwards)
- Continuation of capital investment in I.T infrastructure, up to £2.000 million per year from 2027/28)

Table 2: Forecast Capital Programme at Quarter 1 2026/27

Programme	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m	2031/32 £m	2032/33 £m
Adult Care & Health	0.609	-	1.585	-	-	-	-
Children, Families & Education	10.589	9.000	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
Finance	11.077	4.750	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Neighbourhoods	40.177	10.299	8.520	10.298	8.000	8.000	8.000
Regeneration & Place	60.468	113.690	7.928	6.553	5.100	5.100	5.100
Total	**122.920**	**137.739**	**22.533**	**21.351**	**17.600**	**17.600**	**17.600**

F.3 This presentation of the possible future Capital Programme will be updated as departments estimate future capital requirements, subject to full capital approval process.

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Appendix G

Capital Programme – Scheme Updates

G.1 **Children, Families & Education**

School Condition Allocation (SCA) – Slippage in this budget area has been to a number of reasons including legal challenge, programme review linked to issues raised by Headteachers and capacity in the Assets Team to work up schemes.

The large roof scheme at the Joesph Paxton Campus (Wirral Hospital School) has now commenced and a recent contract variation has been approved to complete phase 2 delivery of the balance of roof replacements at the site.

Headteachers presented to the Director of Children's Services and Chief Exec in January 2026 following schemes of work not being completed linked to Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Pod's. The Assets Team have worked tirelessly to follow up on all outstanding works, additional requirements, and snagging. This has resulted in some works being scheduled for the summer 2026 break when the children are not on site.

Heating system replacements are now designed and scheduled for delivery during the summer break (Quarter 2) including West Kirby Primary, Higher Bebington Juniors and Bidston Primary Schools.

During Quarter 1 capital has been allocated to identify how additional capacity (pupil places) could be added to both Meadowside Special School and Fender Primary School. This has included the design and commissioning of an additional mobile classroom facilities to be dropped on the school sites during Quarter 2. Land surveys are also planned for Quarter 2 at Meadowside Special School to investigate additional staff parking outside of the school site.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) / High Needs Provision Capital – This budget area has been over committed in the short term due to two significant schemes – the Foxfield additional classrooms / Profound & Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) classroom restructure and The Mosslands new build council contribution to the PMLD suite. Both schemes will ensure the schools are best placed to meet needs of the children they educate and responds to the local SEND sufficiency requirements.

G.2 **Neighbourhoods**

Highway Maintenance – Wirral's share is £1.775 million for this final year of the Department for Transport maintenance funding. The funding is disbursed through the City Region.

This funding comes with several requirements, which must be reported and met by November 2026. This requires the publication of a Transparency report, being published by September 2026, with a further detailed account of spending profiles and training by November 2026.

As an incentive for authorities to comply, part of the funding is held back.

Most of the funding was allocated to surface treatments, and like last year some footway works. The works have already commenced. The main programme is well on the way and the following works completed to the end of June:

- Micro-surfacing, (83 schemes)
- Carriageway thin micro, (71 schemes)
- HRA surfacing, (15 schemes)
- Asphalt sealing, (7 schemes)
- Footway surface treatment, (30 schemes)
- Footway refurbishment, (4 schemes)

This means some 57km of the network has been treated in some way, of a total planned length of 85km, showing we are well on the way to deliver this year's programme.

- **PSDS Decarbonisation Phase 4 -** The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) is being delivered by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) that will invoice the Council for the participant contribution for the work completed. The funding was awarded through a government scheme administered by Salix Funding.

  The LCRCA is responsible for the delivery of the scheme including appointment of the Contractor, obtaining planning and Listed Building consents as well as delivering any necessary upgrades to the electrical supplies.

  The Council is expected to pay 14% of total costs as a participant contribution. Work at Landican Cemetery buildings is almost complete and awaiting clearance checks to connect a solar PV array.

  A planning objection for Wirral Country Park has delayed completion. A resubmission is now in progress following an onsite consultation. The LCRCA appointed Contractor for the works at Wallasey Town Hall, Leasowe Leisure Centre, West Kirby Concourse, The Oval, Floral Pavilion, Birkenhead Central Library & Williamson Art Gallery is currently completing their detailed surveys to develop the RIBA Stage 4 designs that will be taken forward to planning and (where applicable) Listed Building Consent.

- **DEFRA - Food Waste Collection Service** - We have received the full complement of food waste caddies and liners and are busy delivering these to the residents across the Wirral. We have received 9 out of the 15 new food waste collection vehicles with the remainder expected to be delivered in August.

G.4 **Regeneration & Place**

- **Asset Management - Demolitions –** Tenders are underway for the demolition of two small buildings – Arrow Park Bowls Pavilion and Leverhulme Tennis Pavilion.

- **Asset Management – Mosslands School new build & land works –** Construction of the new Mosslands School has remained on schedule during Quarter 1 of 2026/27. The major grounds works have been completed for phase 1 and Willmott-Dixon have now been approved to connect to the main United Utilities drain. Council Parks and Countryside have now completed the preparation of the grassed area off Cross Lanes for delivery of physical education and outdoor games. Outstanding items still to be addressed are currently being progressed by Council Legal Services and Assets; these including the 'Build over Agreement' and Wayleaves / leases etc for the new SPEN substation to be constructed by Willmott-Dixon. Final stage payments were made to the Department for Education during Quarter 1 in line with the agreed s151 agreements. The steels for the new sports hall are now beginning to be erected and will form the basis of the steel signing ceremony which will take place 26th June 2026.

- **Housing – Aids & Adaptations** – Officers have reviewed Government grant funding allocations for Adaptations for 2026/27 and existing commitments which has enabled draft budget setting activity for the work streams which make up the Adaptations Programme to take place. Projections will be reviewed against the budget at the end of Quarter 1 and consideration given to any adjustments as appropriate.

- **Housing – Local Authority Housing Fund 2 (LAHF2) –** 25 properties have been acquired to date across three of the LAHF programme rounds, with a further four properties currently progressing through the conveyancing process. Of the homes acquired to date, 12 are being used as temporary accommodation to support homelessness demands and 13 for general needs housing. With the addition of a round 4 LAHF allocation in March 2026, a further five properties on top of the four currently progressing through the conveyancing process are required for the LAHF programmes during 2026/27. Officers are continuing to source properties off the open market to fulfil this requirement.

- **Regeneration - Birkenhead Town Centre** – Discussions with Muse and a revised Partnership Business Plan are ongoing. Price street due diligence site investigations are to be completed by the end of July, and housing delivery options are currently being reviewed. Overall costs will not exceed the £0.363 million allocation. Primary Sub-Station completion date has been extended to August 2026 to accommodate the SPEN energisation phase which commenced in April 2026. Drawdown 14 (Payment) £0.154 million was authorised in May 2026 with BACS transfer in June.

- **Regeneration - Birkenhead Waterfront –** Waterfront infrastructure: Following approval of the RIBA 4 design by the Council's Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in March 2026, the Council is in a procurement phase with Sisk, allowing Sisk to market test the works and issue a contract offer. A decision regarding the main construction contract award is expected to be taken by the relevant Council Committee in Quarter 2 2026/27.

  Other third-party Projects: Battle of the Atlantic has started on site in April 2026, following a delay in gaining planning approval. The Priory is out to tender for a contractor for the main build, which has been delayed due to procurement/resourcing issues. Woodside Ferry Pontoon has been completed with all funds spent. These delays have caused the slippage of approx. £0.500 million that will be slipped into future years.

- **Regeneration - Central Birkenhead -** Following the award of additional grant funding last Quarter, both the JOY project and the Future Yard project are making strong progress. The main construction phase of the JOY project is forecast to complete in Quarter 2 2026/27, while works at Future Yard are now on site and advancing at pace aligned to the programme. The Start Yard project, which will deliver an enhanced workspace offering, is also progressing well on site. works are now progressing at JOY.

- **Regeneration – Borough Yard –** The Council has progressed through a Pre-Construction Services Agreement with John Sisk & Sons. The timescales to entering into the main construction contract and grant funding agreements have been extended to refine the drainage strategy for the site. Grant drawdown is expected from Quarter 3 2026/27 onwards.

- **Regeneration - Seacombe River Corridor -** Following a formal public procurement exercise to select a developer, Countryside Properties (UK) Ltd has now been chosen to deliver new homes on the Wallasey Town Hall Annexe sites. The next steps will include final designs, community consultation and bringing forward the development, subject to the appropriate planning consent.

MINUTE EXTRACT

SENIOR OFFICER APPOINTMENTS AND STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2026

PAY POLICY 2027 – 2028

The Assistant Director of People and Organisational Culture presented the report which, in line with the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), provided the Council's Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2027-2028. The purpose of the report was to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting pay and it identified the methods by which the salaries of all employees were determined and also detailed the levels and salary packages of senior staff.

It was noted that the Head of Paid Service had the responsibility for ensuring that the provisions set out in this statement were applied consistently throughout the Council. It was highlighted that the Council was a foundation living wage employer.

There were no substantive changes from last years report with the exception of Section 11 where there was a reference to the code that was applied in relation to Senior Officer recruitment.

The ratio between Chief Executive and Senior Officer pay had slightly decreased to show an improvement from last years ratio.

It was clarified that the Pay Policy was a state of affairs document. If any changes were required, such as in relation to terms and conditions and discussions with Trade Unions, normal processes would need to be followed.

A Member highlighted the good work around the foundation living wage and queried how the Council could be sure that the organisations who were awarded Council contracts also paid the foundation living wage. The Assistant Director of People and Organisational Culture responded that an answer would be sought from the relevant Directors and provided to Members.

In relation to salary sacrifice, a Member asked whether there was any data regarding electric vehicle sales and the cycle to work scheme and any information around the extension of these schemes. The Assistant Director of People and Organisational Culture responded that further information would be provided to the Sub-Committee and the approach to the schemes would be considered.

Resolved – That Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2027-2028.

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SENIOR OFFICER APPOINTMENTS AND STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 29 September 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2027-2028**
REPORT OF:	**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

REPORT SUMMARY

In line with the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), the purpose of the Council's Pay Policy Statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting pay by identifying:

- The methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;
- The detail and level of the salary package of its most senior staff; and
- The Head of Paid Service responsibility for ensuring the provisions set out in this statement are applied consistently throughout the Council and recommending any amendments to Full Council.

The Pay Policy Statement 2027-2028 supports the effective delivery of the Council Plan by ensuring a fair and equitable approach to pay for all Council employees: Council's employees are here to help make the Council's ambitions a reality, to achieve the goals and priorities set out in the Draft Wirral Plan.

The approval of the annual Pay Policy Statement is a key decision of the Council and affects all wards.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee is requested to recommend that Council approve the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2027-2028.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 The Council is required by Section 38 of the Act to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. The Act requires that the Pay Policy Statement:

- Includes details in relation to all aspects of Chief Officer's remuneration, increases and additions to remuneration, bonuses, termination payments and remuneration upon recruitment.
- Includes information about the relationship between the remuneration of its highest paid officers ('chief officers') and lowest paid employees.
- Is published as soon as is reasonably practicable, after approval and/or amendment (which must include publication on the authority's website).

1.2 It is essential that the Council's approach to pay, as set out in this Pay Policy Statement, is accessible for citizens and enables local taxpayers to take an informed view of whether local decisions on all aspects of remuneration are fair and make best use of public funds.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 No other options were considered as the Pay Policy Statement is a requirement of the Act. There are a range of policies and discretions contained within the Pay Policy statement itself relating to pay and terms and conditions which are the most appropriate.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Pay Policy Statement details the Council's current arrangements, using the definitions contained in the Act and associated guidance.

3.2 The Act also requires the Council to have regard to statutory guidance entitled 'Openness and accountability in local pay' under the Transparency Agenda.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council is committed to the Foundation Living Wage with implementation taking place on 1 April each year. The budget for salary, and associated oncosts are distributed across the directorates and informed by the Pay Policy.

4.2 An annual growth item is included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan for increases in pay, the total value will vary depending on inflation assumptions after accounting for the cost of the most recently agreed pay award.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Section 38 of the Act requires the Council to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year by 31 March.

5.2 The Council remains bound by relevant employment (and other) legislation as the employer and any changes which may be proposed by the policy must bear in mind the requirements of such legislation.

5.3 The Council can amend the pay policy on an annual basis as required by the Act but may also amend the policy as needed to take into account changing legislative requirements.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Council is required to prepare and approve its Pay Policy Statement by 31 March each year. Failure to approve the Pay Policy Statement within the required timeframe would place the Council at risk of non-compliance with the Localism Act 2011 and could weaken the Council's ability to demonstrate openness, accountability and transparency in relation to pay and wider remuneration arrangements.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Pay Policy Statement for 2027-2028 has been shared with the Trade Unions.

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. An Equality Impact Assessment 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 Council operates all pay arrangements within the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. All pay arrangements are regularly reviewed to identify any equality issues applicable to the workforce.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of greenhouse gases. The salary sacrifice scheme supports employees to buy bicycles through the cycle to work scheme. Employees can also lease electric cars through the car lease scheme. Over 50% of the car lease fleet is either pure electric or hybrid. Employees have the option to lease for up to 4 years to make EV/Hybrid vehicles more affordable and accessible to a larger part of the workforce.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Pay Policy Statement and the Council's commitment to the Foundation Living Wage will increase spend in the local economy: 76% of Council staff reside in Wirral.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There can be direct and indirect impacts. Inequitable pay can cause financial dependence on partners in abusive relationships, reducing the ability to leave or seek help. Individuals on lower income brackets may be more vulnerable to being victims of crime (e.g. through fraud, exploitation, etc.). Any actual/perceived inequity can contribute to social unrest.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Mark Dale**
Assistant Director: People & Organisational Culture

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Pay Policy Statement 2027-2028

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Localism Act 2011 and Guidance
The Local Government Transparency Code 2015
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015
Pay Policy Statement 2025-2026

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with section 1.2(a) of its Terms of Reference, to formulate, co-ordinate and implement corporate policies and strategies.

The report is being referred to Council for decision in accordance with the Part 3(A) of the Constitution 'Functions Reserved to Council', specifically 2(b)(n) 'Approving the Annual Senior Officer Pay Policy Statement'.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council	21 July 2025
Senior Officer & Appointment Sub-Committee	8 July 2025
Council	2 December 2024
Policy & Resources Committee	6 November 2024
Council	20 March 2023
Policy & Resources Committee	15 February 2023

Pay Policy Statement
2027-2028

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1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1. The Council is required to comply with the guidance issued or approved by the Secretary of State.

1.2. In line with the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) and associated guidance, the purpose of this statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting pay by identifying:

- The methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;
- The detail and level of the salary package of its most senior staff i.e. 'Chief Officers', as defined by the relevant legislation;
- The Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service have responsibility for ensuring the provisions set out in this statement are applied consistently throughout the Council and recommending any amendments to Full Council;
- Details in relation to all aspects of Chief Officer's remuneration, increases and additions to remuneration, bonuses, termination payments and remuneration upon recruitment;
- The relationship between the remuneration of its highest paid officers ('Chief Officers') and lowest paid employees.

1.3. The Council will consult with the relevant Trade Unions in relation to changes and updates to the Pay Policy Statement, before the Policy Statement is considered by Full Council.

1.4. Once approved by Full Council, this Policy Statement will come into immediate effect and will be subject to review on a minimum of an annual basis; the Policy Statement being approved by 31 March each year.

1.5. The Council may, by resolution, amend this Pay Policy Statement, including after the beginning of the financial year to which it relates.

1.6. The Council will, as soon as is reasonably practicable, after approving or amending the Pay Policy Statement, publish the statement or the amended Statement. This will be published on the Council's website.

2. The Scope of this Policy

2.1. This Pay Policy Statement relates to staff employed by Wirral Council whose salary package including rate of pay and terms and conditions are determined by and are within the control of the Council.

3. Other Legislation Relevant to Pay and Salary Package

3.1. In determining the pay and salary packages of all of its employees, the Council will comply with all relevant employment legislation.

3.2. It is Council policy to ensure that there is no pay discrimination within its terms and conditions of employment, including pay structures. Any pay differentials can be objectively justified through the use of job evaluation, which directly establishes the relative levels of posts by grades according to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role.

3.3. Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations 2017), the Council is required to publish an annual gender pay gap report, reporting a snapshot of the workforce in scope as at 31 March (previous year).

3.4. The Council will ensure that it meets the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. The Transparency Code requires that all local authorities publish certain information related to the organisation, salaries and fraud including:

- Organisation chart
- Senior salaries
- The pay multiple
- Trade union facility time
- Fraud
- Constitution

4. Pay Structure

4.1 The Council uses the National Joint Council (NJC) nationally negotiated pay spine (i.e. a defined list of salary points) as the basis for its pay structure.

4.2 The Council employs staff on other pay and terms and conditions including Craft, Youth and Community, Soulbury, Teachers, NHS, and pay is in accordance with national pay spines.

4.3 The Council adopts the national pay bargaining arrangements in respect of the establishment and revision of national pay spines, for example through any agreed annual pay increases negotiated with joint Trade Unions, subject to any local agreements in place.

4.4 Where a nationally negotiated pay spine does not apply, the Council will determine the salary rate through local negotiation and agreement. Trade Unions will be consulted as appropriate.

4.5 All other pay related issues are the subject of either nationally or locally negotiated rates, in accordance with collective bargaining, or in accordance with the terms set out in this Policy Statement.

4.6 In determining its grading structure and setting salary packages for any posts which fall outside the scope of the national pay bargaining arrangements, the Council takes account of the need to ensure value for money in respect of the use of public

expenditure, balanced against the need to recruit and retain employees who are able to meet the requirements of providing high quality services to the community.

4.7 There are circumstances where the terms of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment: Regulations: TUPE) may determine the eligibility of pay awards for employees who transfer into the Council on protected terms and conditions.

5. Variations to Pay Grade

5.1 On occasion it may be necessary to take account of the external pay levels in the employment market in order to attract and retain employees with particular experience, skills and knowledge. Where necessary the Council will ensure the requirement for such is objectively justified by reference to clear and transparent evidence. This will include relevant market comparators and benchmarking information, recruitment and retention challenges, skilled nature of the work and other relevant data from local government, sector or service sources as appropriate.

5.2 Proposals should be made by the recruiting manager, supported by a business case providing objective justification for the proposed variation. Proposed variations must be with the agreement of the relevant Executive Director/Director, the Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of People and Organisational Culture.

5.3 Any temporary supplement to the salary scale for the grade is approved in accordance with the Council's Honoraria procedure, or any applicable market rate supplement arrangements. Arrangements are kept under review and subject to an annual review as a minimum. Any proposed changes to arrangements are subject to consultation with the individual.

6. Job Evaluation

6.1 Post grades are determined using Job Evaluation schemes and the Council's pay structures.

7. The Foundation Living Wage (FLW)

7.1 The Foundation Living Wage (FLW) rates are based on Minimum Income Standards methodology and seek to take account of real living costs for essential goods and services.

7.2 Through the Council's Pay Policy Statement, the Council is committed to and pays the Foundation Living Wage for all employees.

7.3 The FLW rate is reviewed and announced by The Living Wage Foundation in November each year. The Council will consider any increases to the FLW as part of

the annual Pay Policy Statement. If agreed, increases to the FLW will take effect from 1 April the following year. The provision for the FLW will be kept under review.

8. New Appointments

8.1 New appointments will normally be made at the minimum Spinal Column Point (SCP) of the relevant pay scale for the grade. Where the candidate is already in receipt of remuneration above the minimum SCP of the pay scale, the appointment will normally be made at the next SCP in the grade. If the employee is already in receipt of acting up or honoraria or if the job is regraded to a higher level through the Council's Job Evaluation scheme, the appointment or new salary will normally be made at the next SCP in the grade.

8.2 Where a new appointment is made that requires an employee to undertake immediate formal training before they are fully qualified or fully competent to carry out the full duties of the role, for example through a traineeship or through utilisation of the apprentice levy, the appointment will normally be made at 80% of the minimum SCP of the relevant pay scale for the grade (as a minimum this will be equivalent to the FLW). Salary matching will not normally apply.

8.3 The appointment salary may be varied with the agreement of the Assistant Director of People and Organisational Culture.

9. Progression through Pay Grades

9.1 An employee's progression through the increments of a particular pay grade is linked to length of service. Increments are awarded on 1 April each year, or for new appointments between 1 October and 31 March, six months from the start date.

9.2 Where a seasonal employee returns to the same job role and has worked for the Council in the previous year or season, it is Council policy to recognise that previous service and apply the increment.

9.3 The arrangements and factors considered in determining an individual's progression through their pay grade may be determined by experience, skills and qualifications as set out in the relevant job description and progression criteria, for example for career progression frameworks and traineeships.

10. Senior Management Salary

10.1 For the purposes of this statement, senior management means 'Chief Officers' as defined under section 43(2) of the Localism Act 2011. This includes statutory chief officers, non-statutory Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers as listed within that Act.

10.2 The posts falling within the statutory definition are set out in '*The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency ('the data transparency code")'.*

10.3 The Council's grading structure for its most senior officers reflects the size, scope and responsibilities of the role, including the range of services they are accountable for. The grades are as follows:

- Chief Executive
- Executive Director
- Director 1
- Director 2
- Assistant Director 1
- Assistant Director 2

10.4 The terms and conditions, including the payment of any allowances for Chief Officers is set out within the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers of Local Authorities constitution conditions of service salaries. All details of Chief Officer salaries are published in accordance with the Transparency Code.

10.5 The Chief Executive handbook sets out the terms and conditions of employment for the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. Some provisions within this also apply to Council's Statutory Officers (Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer).

11 Recruitment of Chief Officers

11.1 The requirements concerning recruitment are set out in the Officer Employment Procedure Rules at Part 4(7) of the Council's Constitution, which sets out the ability of the Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub-Committee to lead on the appointment of Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers. Under its terms of reference, at Part 3B of the Constitution, the Sub-Committee will lead in making a recommendation to Council in respect of those Chief Officers listed at para. 11.4 below, but may make direct appointments in respect of other Chief Officer posts, or have delegated that function to the Head of Paid Service (or nominee). This is particularly the case in respect of Deputy Chief Officers and which are those posts identified as Assistant Director or Head of Services that report directly to a Chief Officer.

11.2 The Employment Procedure Rules are supplemented by the Council's Senior Recruitment Protocol. This protocol sets out the standards and practice which will be applied to all senior officer recruitment processes. It applies to posts at Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer level, as defined by the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 and Wirral Council's Constitution.

11.3 The determination of the salary to be offered to any newly appointed Chief Officer will be in accordance with the pay structure and relevant policies in place at the time of

recruitment. The Council's Chief Officer pay scales are published on the Council's website.

11.4 The Localism Act Guidance says that Council should have the opportunity to vote before salary packages of £100,000 or more are agreed. Through the Council's Constitution, this is delegated to the Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub-Committee, other than for those roles where the full Council has reserved powers in respect of defined posts.

11.5 A meeting of Full Council will approve the appointment to the following:

- Head of Paid Service;
- Section 151 Officer (also known as Chief Finance Officer);
- Monitoring Officer;
- Returning Officer (for which expenses may be claimed); and
- Electoral Registration Officer.

12 Additions to Salary

12.1 In addition to basic salary, the following posts receive additional pay as set out below:

Post / Tier of post	**Payment details**
Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service	Returning Officer duties: • National statutory amount for Parliamentary/National Elections. • Locally determined amount in accordance with national guidance for Local Government Elections.
All eligible employees	Allowances in accordance with the Council's Terms and Conditions.
All eligible employees	Payment of professional subscriptions as determined by the criteria set out below.

12.2 The Council has a Premium Payments Policy which sets out the rates of enhancements (premium payments) for all staff within the Council including the eligibility criteria to ensure fairness and transparency.

12.3 The Council will consider paying registration fees, annual certification fees, membership of professional associations fees etc in the following circumstances and as agreed by The Assistant Director: People & Organisational Culture:

- When ongoing ‘registration’ with a regulating body is a statutory requirement to practice.
- The profession is regulated in law as “licensed” as defined in the Professional Qualifications Act. This is limited to one membership of a professional body or annual certification per employee per year. The list of “licensed regulated professions” can be found on the government website.
- Employees undertaking agreed training (outlined within a Directorate’s People Plan) which requires annual certification fees or membership of professional associations for the period of that training.

13 Salary Sacrifice Schemes

13.1 Wirral Council currently provides a range of employee benefits to its workforce including discounted shopping, childcare vouchers, cycle scheme, and a car lease scheme. The cycle scheme and car lease scheme operate through a salary sacrifice arrangement. Salary sacrifice is where an employee chooses to give up part of their salary for a given period of time in return for a benefit provided by the employer, the value of which is exempt from tax and national insurance contributions. We offer a cycle scheme which runs for 12 months and a car lease scheme which runs for up to 48 months.

13.2 The Employee Benefits Schemes are part of the Council’s commitment to workforce reward and recognition and support the Council’s attraction and retention strategy. The schemes do not form part of the Council’s contractual terms and conditions of employment.

13.3 Employees who cancel the salary sacrifice arrangement or leave the organisation within the agreement period, will be liable to a charge. Charges may be taken from final net pay as appropriate.

14 Pension Contributions

14.1 The employer’s pension contribution is required to be published under S7 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011.

14.2 The Council will automatically enroll all eligible employees into the Local Government Pension scheme and the Council is required to make a contribution to the scheme representing a percentage of the pensionable salary due under the contract of employment of that employee.

14.3 The rate of contribution is set by Actuaries advising Merseyside Pension Fund and reviewed every three years in order to ensure the scheme is appropriately funded.

15 Payments on Termination

15.1 The Council's approach to statutory and discretionary payments on termination of employment for all employees, including Chief Officers, prior to reaching normal retirement age, is set out within the Council's Enhanced Discretionary Severance Scheme.

15.2 The Council will keep its Enhanced Discretionary Severance Scheme under review. Any changes, as approved by Full Council are published in accordance with the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

15.3 Any payments upon termination in respect of a Chief Officer exceeding £100,000, (apart from contractual payments, where the Council has no discretion) shall be subject to a vote at Council or relevant Committee or Panel of Members with delegated authority to approve such payments. Payments upon termination are subject to any legislative requirements or caps.

16 Lowest Paid Employees

16.1 The lowest paid persons employed by the Council are employed on full-time equivalent rates in accordance with the Council's grading structures. The grading structures take account of the FLW hourly rate (see section 7).

16.2 The relationship between the rate of pay for the lowest paid employee and Chief Officers is determined by the Council's job evaluation schemes.

As required by the Localism Act, the following table provides the Council's salary ratios.

Definition	**Ratio**
The average full-time equivalent (fte) earnings and the Chief Executive	1: 3.91
The average full-time equivalent (fte) earnings and average Chief Officer earnings	1: 2.93
The lowest paid employee full-time equivalent (fte) earnings and average Chief Officer earnings	1: 4.65

17 Accountability and Decision Making

17.1 In accordance with the Constitution of the Council, the Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for

decision making in relation to Chief Officer recruitment. This may be delegated to the Head of Paid Service.

17.2 The Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service has delegated responsibility for decision-making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to employees of the Council below Chief Officer level.

18 Re-employment / Re-engagement of Employees

18.1 The Council will not re-employ any former employees that have left the Council through early retirement or under the Voluntary Severance Scheme where there has been a cost to the Council, except in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Assistant Director of People and Organisational Culture.

18.2 The Council will not consider applications from former Wirral employees who were dismissed from employment.

19 Publication

19.1 Upon approval by Full Council, this statement will be published on the Council's Website and Intranet.

19.2 In line with the requirement of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, the Council will publish an organisation chart covering staff in the top three levels of the organisation, which will include the following information:

- Department
- Team
- Job Title
- Permanent or temporary status
- Grade
- Salary in £5,000 brackets
- Salary ceiling (the maximum salary for the grade)
- Contact details

19.3 Actual salary will be published for senior salaries (employees whose salary in that year was at least £50,000).

19.4 Employees whose salaries are more than £150,000 will be identified by name.

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MINUTE EXTRACT

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday 21st September 2026

28 **YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN**

The Youth Offending Service Manager introduced a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which sought endorsement of the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2026 2027. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) was a non-departmental public body for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. The preparation and submission of an 'Annual Plan' was linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award; the award contributed to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

The Wirral Youth Justice Service was a statutory partnership between Police, Probation, the Council and Health partners in accordance with the Crime & Disorder Act 1998/

The report noted that the Youth Justice Service was overseen by the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board. The management board should be formed to provide strategic direction with the aim of preventing offending by children and young people.

As a statutory partner under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Wirral Borough Council had a key role to play in delivering Youth Justice. Endorsement by The Council would support the delivery of this Strategic Plan and therefore the linked aspects of The Wirral Plans.

The Committee welcomed the highly positive Youth Justice annual report and commended the Youth Offending Service Manager and the wider Youth Justice team for achieving Quadrant 1 status. In response to questions, the Youth Offending Service Manager outlined the workforce development programme, which identifies training needs across Merseyside, develops specialist roles and supports staff through peer networks. Members highlighted the success of the Sliding Doors project, peer mentoring arrangements and the reduction in first-time entrants to the youth justice system. The Head of Service - Harm Outside the Home advised that Sliding Doors was now being delivered in schools and used as part of staff training, while the peer mentoring programme had secured funding for a further year and continued to provide development opportunities for young people with lived experience. Responding to further questions, The Youth Offending Service Manager explained that Quadrant 1 status placed Wirral among the top-performing youth justice services nationally and described the No Comment Pathway, which diverted vulnerable young people away from formal criminalisation, noting that 19 young people had completed the pathway with no subsequent reoffending recorded.

The Committee also considered the sustainability of the Turnaround programme and support for victims. The Youth Offending Service Manager confirmed that Turnaround was funded through the Ministry of Justice and Home Office, with

funding secured for a further three years, and emphasised the value of early intervention in preventing escalation and reducing demand on services. The Head of Service - Harm Outside the Home added that, irrespective of future funding arrangements or any change of name, the preventative model would continue to form part of service delivery. In response to questions regarding referrals, The Youth Offending Service Manager advised that children entering the justice system came from a wide range of backgrounds with no significant geographical patterns emerging. He also outlined improvements to victim support services, including revised processes, specialist training and therapeutic interventions tailored to individual needs. The Committee noted forthcoming external recognition for the service, with the Director of Children, Families and Education highlighting nominations for regional and national awards in recognition of the team's innovative and preventative work, and Members expressed their appreciation for the service's achievements and leadership.

Resolved – That

1. **The Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27 be endorsed; and**
2. **The Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27 be recommended to Council for approval.**

WIRRAL

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday 21 September 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN**
REPORT OF:	**DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks endorsement of the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2026-2027. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is a non-departmental public body for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. The preparation and submission of an 'Annual Plan' is linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award; this award contributes to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

The Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-27 supports the draft Wirral Plan 2027-31: A New Chapter for Wirral specifically the aim to be pro-active and increase the amount of early help people can access. It also supports the Wirral Children's Plan 2026-2028 by promoting opportunity for all children and young people, by doing the right thing for our Wirral children and by delivering positive outcomes for our children and families.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This report relates to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to:

1. endorse the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27; and
2. recommend to Council that the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27 be approved.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 Wirral Youth Justice Service is a statutory partnership between Police, Probation, the Council and Health partners in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

1.2 The Youth Justice Service is overseen by the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board. The management board should be formed to provide strategic direction with the aim of preventing offending by children and young people.

1.3 As a statutory partner under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Wirral Borough Council has key role to play in delivering Youth Justice. Endorsement by The Council will support the delivery of this Strategic Plan and therefore the linked aspects of The Wirral Plans.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Not supporting the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2026-27 may result in less clearly aligned and coordinated multi agency activity to prevent offending and re-offending. The lack of an 'Annual Plan' would be contrary to Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Wirral's Youth Justice Service was inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in May 2025 and received an overall rating of 'Good'. In response to the inspection findings, the Youth Justice Management Board developed an action plan to address all identified areas for development, which is reviewed on a quarterly basis. While the inspection recognised several areas of outstanding practice, it also identified a small number of areas requiring further improvement. The service's ambition is to build on its strong performance and achieve an 'Outstanding' rating at future HMIP inspections. Page 16 of the Annual Plan outlines the progress made over the last 12 months in addressing the areas identified for improvement and strengthening service delivery.

3.2 Wirral Youth Justice Service continues to perform strongly at a national level and remains within Quadrant 1 of the Youth Justice Board's performance framework. This reflects the service's sustained achievement against key performance indicators and its recognised commitment to innovation in preventing children from entering the criminal justice system and supporting positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

3.3 The national governing body, the Youth Justice Board, has set out National areas of key performance for all Youth Justice Board. Since 2023 there have been addition key performance indicators from three to thirteen,

These national indicators are:

- The amount and rate of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (FTEs).
- The use of custody (Use of youth custody as opposed to managing young people in the community).
- The rate of Re-offending.
- Suitable accommodation.
- Education, training, and employment.
- Special educational needs and disabilities/Additional learning needs.
- Mental health care and emotional well-being.
- Substance misuse.
- Out of Court Resolutions.
- Links to wider services.
- Management board attendance.
- Serious violence.
- Victims / Harm Person data

3.4 First time entrants' (FTE) rate between April 2025 and March 2026 was 141 per 100,000 children (45 children) compared to 150 (48 children) the previous year. As a collective the Merseyside footprint (Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral) has a rate of 169 per 100,000 children, across the Northwest the FTE rate is 160 per 100,000 and across England and Wales the FTE rate is 147 all of which are higher.

3.5 The FTE data shows children in Wirral are less likely to enter the formal criminal justice system for the first time than children in many other areas. Instead of being drawn into court processes, more children are being given the opportunity to receive support, guidance and interventions that help them address the causes of their behaviour and make positive changes to their lives.

3.6 Whilst the reduction is relatively small, it reflects a sustained long-term trend and demonstrates the impact of a strong partnership approach to prevention and diversion. Every reduction represents children whose lives have been positively redirected away from formal criminalisation and towards support.

3.7 Key areas of impact are identified on page 28 of the Annual plan. The reduction in first-time entrants is about more than performance data. It means more children are staying in education, maintaining positive family and community relationships, and avoiding the long-term consequences that can result from entering the criminal justice system at a young age. By intervening early and focusing on support rather than punishment, Wirral is helping children build safer, healthier and more positive futures while reducing the likelihood of future offending and victimisation.

3.8 Custody remains a measure of last resort for children and young people in Wirral. Wirral Youth Justice Service has maintained a consistently low custody rate over the past four years. Between April 2025 and March 2026, the rate reduced from 0.13 to 0.09 per 1,000 children aged 10-17, equating to one fewer child receiving a custodial sentence. In a borough with a population of 324,900, including approximately 69,500 children and young people aged 0-18, this reflects the continued success of

partnership approaches that seek to address offending behaviour within the community wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. Through robust community Orders, early intervention, prevention, diversionary programmes, restorative approaches and intensive support for children and families, more children are being supported to take responsibility for their behaviour, address the causes of offending and achieve positive outcomes without the long-term impact of custody. Custody is generally reserved for the most serious offences where the courts determine that no suitable community alternative is available.

3.9 Reoffending is one of the most important measures of how effective Youth Justice Services are at supporting children who have already become involved in offending behaviour, often where concerns are more serious and complex. Wirral's Binary (reoffend over a 2-year period of a child/adult) re-offending rate between April 2023 and March 2024 was 31%, which is a 4% reduction compared to the previous year. This follows a 12.83% reduction in the preceding year, representing an overall reduction in reoffending of 16.83% over the last two years.

3.10 These improvements are particularly encouraging given that Wirral is increasingly working with a smaller but more complex group of children and young people who reoffend, many of whom have experienced trauma, exploitation, special educational needs, mental health difficulties and other significant vulnerabilities. Wirral Youth Justice Service adopts a Child First, trauma-informed approach that seeks to understand and address the underlying causes of offending behaviour rather than focusing solely on the offence itself. This includes Enhanced Case Management, restorative practice, education and employment support, family-based interventions and targeted work such as violence, substance misuse and emotional wellbeing.

3.11 Whilst the reduction in reoffending remains an important measure of success, it is only one part of the wider picture. Wirral Youth Justice Service continues to perform strongly within the Youth Justice Board performance framework and is recognised as a Quadrant 1 service, reflecting not only positive outcomes in the headline indicators but also the strength of its prevention, diversion and early intervention work.

3.12 The impact of this preventative approach can be seen beyond the headline reoffending figures. Since its introduction, Enhanced Case Management has supported 24 of the most vulnerable and complex children, with 21 not going on to offend or reoffend. During 2025/26, Operation Inclusion supported 23 children involved in higher gravity offences, with only two reoffending to date, while 19 children accessing the No Comment Pathway have recorded no offending or reoffending. The service also continues to reduce first-time entrants into the justice system through sustained investment in diversion and prevention.

3.13 This sustained reduction in reoffending means fewer victims, safer communities and improved life chances for children and young people, demonstrating that when the Youth Justice Service becomes involved with higher-risk or more serious offending, interventions are increasingly successful in supporting long-term positive change.

3.14 Since 2023, Wirral Youth Justice Service has submitted a range of additional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to the Youth Justice Board to support national performance monitoring and service development. However, the Youth Justice Board has not yet authorised the publication or wider sharing of data relating to these supplementary indicators.

3.15 At present, the Youth Justice Board is undergoing organisational review and restructuring, with a number of performance and oversight responsibilities expected to transfer to the Ministry of Justice over the next 12 to 18 months. Until revised national arrangements are confirmed and approval is provided by the relevant national bodies, reporting to members will continue to focus on the established and approved Youth Justice Board performance measures.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan sets out the budget for 2026-27. This is drawn from Council and statutory partners contributions through direct payment or the commitment of resources as 'in kind' payments. (See Appendix 4 of the Strategic Plan).

4.2 The cost of remanding young people into custody is an area of unpredictable expenditure. Demand on this area of the budget is highly volatile, driven by serious crimes, which are low in volume and infrequent. Remand costs are such that small numbers can impact significantly on the Youth Justice Service's budget. Grant awards to cover remand expenditure are based on a 3-year cycle, which can sometimes lead to a shortfall, depending on previous years remand. In view of this, Wirral Youth Justice Service retained some contingency funds to cover shortfall in this area.

4.3 The current financial pressures are noted as a relevant risk within section 7 of this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the co-operation of the named statutory partners to form a Youth Offending Team, or Youth Justice Service'. Section 38 identifies the statutory partners and places upon them a duty to co-operate to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area. These statutory partners are:

- The Council;
- Police;
- Probation service;
- Public Health England.

5.2 Additional partners may also be recruited to the joint strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people.

5.3 The primary duty to ensure a Youth Justice Service is in place rests with the Council. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty the Council to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to its provision of youth justice services and sets

out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It is the duty of the Council, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should also address the functions assigned to a youth justice service, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The Strategic Plan references a broad range of activity delivered in the context of youth justice in Wirral. As part of the Youth Justice Management Board arrangements, the board will retain an overview of any changes to partnership structures, assets and activities that may impact on service delivery around those activities and services highlighted within the plan.

6.2 Changes to the structure of the Youth Justice Service in Wirral will only be undertaken through reporting and approval to the Youth Justice Management Board, considering local need, cost benefit and considering other options.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Failing to deliver the Strategic Plan will impact on the Youth Justice grant being received from the Youth Justice Board as it is a requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, management oversight and Youth Justice Management Board arrangements will monitor performance and delivery.

7.2 Strategic and operational risks will also be monitored through quarterly returns to the National Youth Justice Board, which are a legal requirement, and through the Youth Justice Management Board risk register, with an escalation route via the Directorate Risk Register.

7.3 Changes to national youth justice policy or future funding arrangements from the Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board may impact the delivery of local youth justice services and the outcomes achieved for children and communities. Emerging national reforms, including the Youth Justice White Paper, are expected to increase expectations on youth justice services to deliver improved outcomes, earlier intervention and more integrated support for children. There remains a risk, however, that increased statutory and operational expectations are not matched by sustainable long-term funding, workforce capacity, or wider system resources. To mitigate this risk, Wirral Youth Justice Service maintains active engagement with national and regional networks, including the Youth Justice Board, Merseyside Criminal Justice Board and Merseyside Youth Justice Managers Group, to ensure early awareness of policy changes and funding opportunities. The service has secured and sustained external funding streams, including Turnaround, Violence Reduction Partnership funding, Young Futures Prevention Panel funding and Custody Navigator investment, while aligning local priorities to emerging national reforms to maximise opportunities for future funding and service development

7.4 Children and young people known to Wirral Youth Justice Service continue to present with increasingly complex and overlapping needs, including the effects of trauma, mental health difficulties, neurodiversity and special educational needs and

disabilities (SEND). National and local SEND reforms, supported through the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, aim to improve assessment processes, Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and transitions into adulthood, including for children involved in the youth justice system. Despite this progress, challenges remain within key support services, particularly speech and language provision, which continue to place pressure on service delivery and have been identified within the Youth Justice Service risk register. These issues reflect wider demands across children's services, health, education and early help systems, and may affect the timeliness and effectiveness of support available to vulnerable children. This risk is mitigated through strong multi-agency partnership arrangements, including dedicated education and health resources within the service, SEND Single Point of Contact arrangements, access to an Educational Psychologist, specialist school nurses, emotional health and wellbeing pathways, enhanced case management, trauma-informed practice and regular oversight through the Youth Justice Management Board. A detailed report identifying speech and language needs has also been submitted to commissioning services to support future service development and resource allocation.

7.5 The current financial pressures facing the Council and its partners represent a risk to future funding, which, if reduced, could impact service delivery. Any changes to future funding arrangements will be considered through a cost-benefit analysis, including 'invest to save' considerations. This risk is mitigated through ongoing financial monitoring by the Youth Justice Management Board, the maintenance of partner contributions through pooled funding arrangements, the successful securing of additional external funding streams, and the delivery of evidence-based prevention and diversion programmes that demonstrate positive outcomes and support future investment decisions. Where budget pressures arise, options appraisals and business cases are developed to identify sustainable solutions and minimise any impact on frontline services.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Feedback has been gathered through the partnership's participation and engagement network. This included direct feedback from young people involved with Youth Justice.

8.2 Members of the Youth Justice Management Board and Community Safety Partnership have been consulted with during the development of the Strategic Plan.

8.3 The Strategic Plan (page 12) highlights the ongoing commitment to the voice of children and harmed people. This is delivered through participation and engagement across young people and engagement with victims and carers linked to the work of Wirral's Youth Justice Service.

8.4 Appendix 6 contains the Wirral Youth Justice Service Participation and Engagement Strategy/Report and Peer Mentoring Report, 2025.

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. An Equality Impact

Assessment 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 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed for the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan.

https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments

9.3 The PDF file may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact Mark Evans if you would like this document in an accessible format.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications arising from this report. It is anticipated that the Strategic Plan will have no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The work undertaken in the Youth Justice Annual Plan demonstrates that reducing children's vulnerability to exploitation not only improves individual outcomes but also contributes to stronger and more resilient communities. Wirral's approach focuses on early intervention, prevention, and diversion, helping children remain connected to their families, schools and local neighbourhoods rather than becoming involved in crime or the justice system. Programmes such as Turnaround, peer mentoring, Operation Inclusion, and community-based activities support children to develop confidence, resilience and positive relationships, while strengthening their sense of belonging within their community.

11.2 Importantly, these approaches help children build a positive pro-social identity and create pathways into education, training and employment. The Annual Report identifies low confidence, low self-esteem and disengagement from mainstream education as common vulnerabilities for children at risk of offending. In response, the service has developed accredited learning opportunities, peer mentoring, community projects and stronger links into education, training and employment pathways. This supports children to recognise their strengths, gain new skills and aspirations, and become active contributors within their communities. By reducing the likelihood of children becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), preventing offending and exploitation, and increasing participation in positive activities, the service contributes to long-term community wellbeing, economic participation and safer neighbourhoods across Wirral.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Delivery of effective Children's Services support and promote positive activities, engagement and outcomes, intended to divert children, young people and their families from crime and disorder.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-27

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Youth Justice Board: Youth Justice Plan guidance 2026-27

Youth justice plans: guidance for youth justice services - GOV.UK

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference,

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People & Education Committee	**September 2025** **October 2024** **September 2023**

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Wirral Youth Justice

Strategic Plan

Service	Wirral Youth Justice Service 2026-27
Service Manager/Lead	Mark Evans
Chair of YJS Board	Elizabeth Hartley

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- Appendix 6: Annual Participation Report and Peer Mentoring 2025-26.
- Appendix 7: Chief Exec: Working Together – Council Plan 2023-27.
- Appendix 8: Activity-Based Interventions – children and harmed person/s
- Appendix 9: Trauma Action Plan reviewed March 2026.
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- Appendix 16: Common Youth Justice terms

Foreword

It is my privilege to present Wirral's Youth Justice Strategic Annual Plan for 2026–2027, reaffirming our continued commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people across the borough. As Chair of the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board, I am honoured to work alongside a committed multi-agency partnership; together, we provide coordinated support to children and young people who are either involved in, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system. This plan sets out our collective ambition to deliver effective, evidence-informed services that reduce reoffending, protect the public, and promote the welfare and future prospects of all Wirral children.

Over the preceding year, the Youth Justice Service has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in responding to an evolving landscape, while maintaining a clear focus on continuous improvement. In developing this plan, the Management Board has undertaken a robust review of performance data, audit findings, and resource deployment. This has ensured that our strategic priorities remain informed, proportionate, and responsive to local need.

This Annual Plan provides both assurance and strategic direction. It sets out our key objectives for the year ahead, while reinforcing a culture of reflection, accountability, and innovation across the partnership. The views and lived experiences of children and young people remain integral to this process; our participation and engagement activity has ensured that their voices continue to influence service development and delivery. We remain acutely aware of the significant challenges faced by many children in Wirral, including the impact of deprivation, inequality, and adverse childhood experiences. In response, we will continue to champion a 'Child First' approach, underpinned by trauma-informed practice and a strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and whole-family support.

Ongoing investment in workforce development has strengthened the capability of staff and partners to respond effectively to complex need. Furthermore, enhanced collaboration with early help and prevention services has enabled more timely and proportionate interventions, reducing unnecessary progression into the formal youth justice system. This preventative approach will continue to be a central feature of our practice.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally recognise and thank all partners, staff, and volunteers for their continued professionalism, dedication, and contribution. Their collective efforts are instrumental in driving forward our shared vision. Through sustained partnership working, we remain committed to supporting children to achieve positive outcomes and to contributing to a safer, fairer, and more inclusive Wirral.

Elizabeth Hartley
Chair: Wirral Youth Justice Management Board

Introduction, Vision, and Strategy

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, every Local Authority must produce a Youth Justice Plan outlining how Youth Justice Services (YJS) will be delivered with available resources. This plan articulates the Wirral Youth Justice Service's strategic direction for 2026-2027, outlining our priorities, service delivery model, and intended outcomes. Central to this is our commitment to preventing offending and reoffending by children and young people, through evidence-informed, child-first approaches that address underlying need, reduce risk, and promote positive futures.

Wirral YJS remains firmly committed to working in strong, collaborative partnership with statutory, voluntary, and community organisations, recognising that effective youth justice practice is achieved through a whole-system response. We place significant emphasis on meaningful engagement with children, their families, and wider communities, ensuring that interventions are trauma-informed, strengths-based, and responsive to lived experience. Alongside this, we are equally committed to recognising and responding to the needs of those harmed by youth crime, seeking to enhance their voice, participation, and experience within the justice process through restorative and reparative approaches. This reflects the wider Children's Services Plan ambition of *"working together to secure brighter futures for all,"* ensuring that agencies align to deliver coherent, coordinated support for children and families.

Following the HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspection in April 2025, the Youth Justice Management Board continues to provide robust governance and oversight of a comprehensive improvement action plan. While significant progress has been made during 2025/2026 in addressing a small number of inspection recommendations, the Board recognises that sustained focus is required to embed improvements consistently and achieve better outcomes for Wirral's children.

This Youth Justice Plan is fully aligned with key strategic frameworks, including the Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan, the Wirral Working Together Council Plan 2023–2027, and the 'We Are Wirral' Children's Services Plan 2026-2028. Through this alignment, Wirral YJS contributes to broader system-wide priorities such as reducing inequalities, improving life chances, safeguarding children, and building stronger, safer communities. Our approach reflects a shared ambition across the partnership to deliver sustainable change, reduce harm, and ensure that all children are supported to thrive.

Strategic Vision

Wirral Youth Justice Service exists to ensure that every child and young person is seen and supported as a child first, with their identity, needs and potential understood beyond their behaviour 'Children First, Offenders Second'.

We will provide the right help at the right time, through high-quality early help in local communities, so that children and families receive timely, proportionate support that prevents escalation and promotes opportunity for all. We will work to keep children safe inside and outside their homes, strengthening protective relationships and ensuring children can grow up in stable, loving homes with the people who matter most to them.

We believe every child should be able to access good-quality education and inclusive support that recognises additional needs, builds strengths, and enables progress and achievement. We will act with effectiveness, efficiency and care, doing the right thing for children and families and using resources responsibly with our partners guided by continuous feedback from children, parents/carers and communities.

Through statutory and preventative interventions, we will ensure children are treated fairly and equitably by the youth justice system, receiving tailored support that recognises individual needs and builds on strengths. Our aim is to foster transformative change for children and their families, enabling them to contribute fully to society and live brighter futures in safe, thriving communities.

We are equally committed to supporting the harmed person/s of crime, ensuring their voices are heard, their needs are responded to, and that restorative, reparative approaches are available where appropriate.

Principles

Our operational and strategic approach is grounded in the following principles:

- Respect for young people in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system, recognising them as individuals who need support.
- Prioritising young people's voices in shaping service provision, embedding participation and engagement in all activities.
- Upholding public safety as a core priority when working with young people accessing our services.
- Delivering fair and equitable services to young people, parents/carers, staff, victims, and the wider community.
- Valuing diversity, including neurodiversity and additional learning needs, while respecting the rights and needs of the harmed person/s, children, young people, and their families.
- Addressing disproportionality to ensure every child is treated equally under the law, regardless of age, ethnicity, or other factors.
- Recognising staff as our most vital resource.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Wirral Youth Justice Service is committed to ensuring that children and young people, and harmed person/s, are treated fairly and equitably within the youth justice system, receiving support tailored to their individual needs and strengths through both statutory and preventative interventions.

In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, Wirral YJS is committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between individuals who share protected characteristics and those who do not
- Fostering good relations between individuals who share protected characteristics and those who do not

We will also actively challenge inequality and discrimination in practice, ensuring that all children are treated fairly across the youth justice system.

To achieve our vision, we recognise the importance of understanding how our policies, decisions, and interventions impact different groups, ensuring we do not inadvertently contribute to inequality.

Wirral YJS has established the following Equality Objectives:

- To eliminate or reduce disadvantages experienced by children due to their protected characteristics
- To meet the differing needs of children from protected groups
- To encourage participation from children in protected groups, particularly where engagement is disproportionately low

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) Management Board maintains strong strategic oversight of equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of quarterly performance reports and dashboard data, which are routinely analysed to identify trends, patterns and disparities across protected characteristics. This includes a focused review of data relating to gender, ethnicity, disproportionality, disability and other equality strands, ensuring that decision-making is informed, transparent and aligned with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

This data-driven approach enables the Board to identify emerging inequalities, monitor outcomes over time, and implement targeted actions to address areas of disproportionality or unmet need. It also supports robust scrutiny of service delivery, ensuring that interventions are equitable, responsive and tailored to the diverse needs of Wirral's children and communities.

Governance is further strengthened through the appointment of a dedicated Board lead for Equality and Diversity, who provides strategic leadership, drives continuous professional challenge, and ensures that equality considerations remain central to all aspects of service planning and delivery. This role is critical in maintaining accountability, championing inclusive practice, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement across the partnership.

At a regional level, Wirral YJS actively contributes to a range of Merseyside multi-agency governance forums, including the Merseyside Youth Performance Information Meeting, the Merseyside Disproportionality Board, and the Merseyside Victim Subgroup. These forums meet quarterly and provide an important mechanism for benchmarking performance, sharing learning, and collaboratively addressing cross-boundary equality issues, including ethnic disproportionality and the experiences of victims.

Insights and analysis from these regional groups are escalated to the Local Merseyside Criminal Justice Board, chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner, ensuring that equality themes and systemic disparities are considered at a strategic partnership level. This multi-layered governance structure strengthens Wirral YJS's ability to influence wider system change, challenge inequities, and drive improved outcomes for children, families, and harmed person/s across the region.

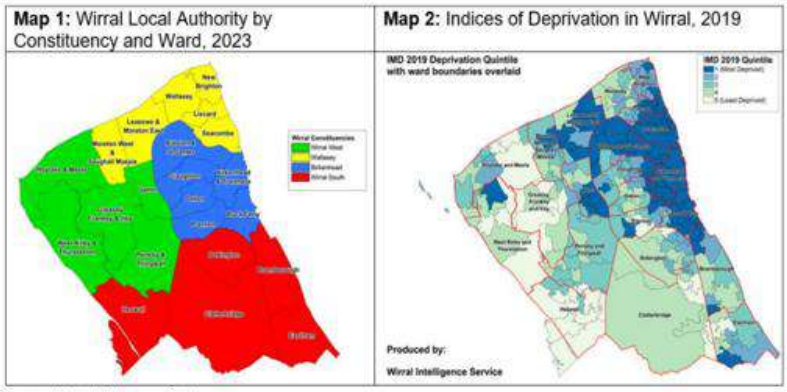
Local Context

Within an area of approximately 60 square miles, Wirral contains individual wards amongst some of the wealthiest in the country, as well as some of the very poorest.

The population is 324,900 including approximately 69,500 children (0-18). The population is predominantly White British (92.4%), but significant ethnic minority groups exist, particularly Irish (0.8%), Indian (0.6%) and Chinese (0.6%).

Almost two-thirds of the population live within the eastern urban area, where levels of deprivation are higher. Birkenhead is the largest town within the borough, historically built around the maritime trades associated with the Mersey docklands. The decline of this industry left a legacy of white working-class boys with reduced opportunities and aspirations.

In 2023, Wirral ranked 40th for total population out of 296 local authority areas in England. As of 2023, Wirral is the 9th most densely populated of the North West's 35 local authority areas. Since the mid-year estimates of 2013, there has been an increase of 12.7% in residents aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 1.2% in residents aged 15 to 64 years, and a decrease of 2.2% in residents aged under 15 years.



Source: Wirral Intelligence Service

In the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Wirral was ranked 77th out of 317 local authority areas in England. Almost one in five (18.9%) children aged under 16 years live in absolute low-income households. 35.6% of the Wirral population live in the top 20% of the most deprived areas of England.

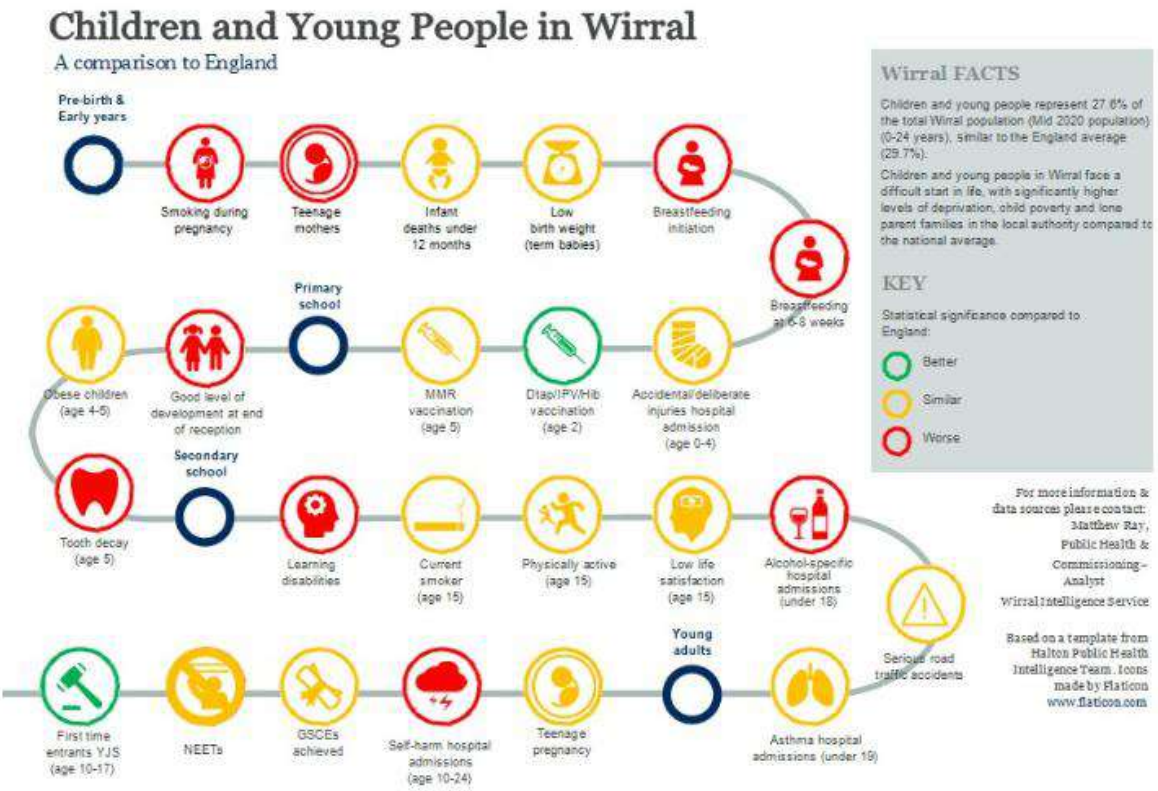
Strategic Links

The Wirral Plan takes account of the social and economic landscape post pandemic, setting out what the Council's priorities are; and how these will transform the way the council provides services between 2023-2027.

The Wirral 2023-2027 Plan focuses on the delivery of the following:

- Working together to promote fairness to people and communities.
- To prioritise those with the greatest needs
- To work across communities with community voluntary and faith organisations and partners to improve all residents' life chances.
- Children and young people have their needs met earlier.
- Children and young people stay safe and are protected from harm.
- Children and young people achieve their potential and are prepared for adulthood.

The chart below highlights key facts about children and young people in Wirral compared to England:



Source: Wirral Intelligence Service

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026/27 is fully aligned with the Children's Services Directorate Business Plan and key Wirral strategies, including the Systemic Practice Model, SEND Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Plan.

Building on over six years of development, the plan contributes to corporate priorities by strengthening prevention and diversion approaches, ensuring children are supported early and kept out of the formal justice system wherever appropriate.

Strong partnership working, both strategically and operationally, remains central to delivery. This ensures alignment with national Youth Justice indicators and supports improved outcomes for children, families, harmed people, and the wider community.

The Youth Justice Service and Management Board maintain clear links with the Safer Wirral Strategy, governed by the Safer Wirral Partnership Board (SWPB) and the WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy, ensuring a joined-up approach to safeguarding and community safety. The Board continues to advocate for the needs of children and young people locally and nationally.

In the last 5 years Wirral has developed a progressive early help system designed to ensure children and families receive the right support at the earliest opportunity. This model brings together self-help, community-led support, and family help through accessible virtual and physical access points, underpinned by learning from programmes such as Breaking the Cycle and strengthened through designation as a Families First for Children Pathfinder.

The Pathfinder is driving whole-system reform, shifting from reactive, high-cost interventions towards prevention, early support, and relationship-based practice. While statutory safeguarding remains critical, there is a clear cultural shift from “process to purpose”, with a strong emphasis on co-production, communication, and working *with* families. This transformation directly supports improvement priorities identified through the ILACS 2023 inspection and aligns with SEND improvement activity through the Priority Action Plan and Delivering Better Value programme.

Significant progress has been made through multi-agency reform, Family Help development, strengthened child protection arrangements, and enhanced family network approaches. This includes the introduction of Family Help Lead Practitioners, expanded multi-disciplinary teams in Family Hubs, and innovative approaches such as Parent Advocacy. As a Pathfinder area, Wirral continues to influence regional and national reform, supporting wider system improvement across the Northwest and contributing to national learning.

Children First

Responding to young people who encounter the Youth Justice System as a ‘Child First,’ enhances lives and reduces offending and reoffending. This approach remains central to our practice in Wirral Youth Justice Service (WYJS) understanding the trauma and challenges faced by children in our service. Over several years, we have developed a trauma-aware and trauma-informed approach by ensuring that all staff are trained to the highest standard in understanding and recognising trauma, but additionally how to work with young people and families to support them in understanding their trauma journey. We continue to utilise and develop our Enhanced Case Managed and Trauma Recovery Models. Further details are provided below.

To promote children in the Youth Justice System and see them as children is in the best interest of the child. Understanding individual children’s needs and building on their strengths is key to working with young people. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.

Wirral’s Youth Justice Service and youth justice system promotes children’s individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance,

leading to safer communities and fewer harmed people. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society. A personalised approach to youth justice is essential to putting children first; and delivering services with equality and impartiality.

The service recognises that meaningful and sustained positive, offence-free lifestyles are rooted in the development of trusted, consistent relationships between children and practitioners. With this understanding at the core of our practice model, Wirral Youth Justice Service has strengthened its relational, trauma-informed approach through a range of targeted interventions and system developments.

Over the past years, we have continued to embed and expand innovative programmes including Enhanced Case Management, Operation Inclusion and the No Comment Pathway. These approaches have been complemented by new priorities focused on the introduction of Custody Navigators, the development of Wirral Young Future Prevention Panels, and the expansion of social prescribing interventions shaped directly by the voice of the child. Collectively, these developments represent a more coordinated and child-centred system, designed to address underlying need, reduce and manage risk, and promote long-term positive outcomes.

As a result, the service has made measurable progress in reducing offending and reoffending, particularly amongst some of our most vulnerable children. Improvements are being seen not only in behavioural outcomes but also in levels of engagement, trust and stability, reflecting a shift towards more responsive and personalised support.

Feedback from children participating in the Enhanced Case Management programme has been consistently positive. Children report feeling better understood, listened to and supported, with an increased sense of trust in the professionals working alongside them. Practitioners and partners have similarly observed strengthened relationships, improved communication and a more coherent, shared understanding of trauma and its impact on behaviour and decision-making.

This growing alignment across the workforce has enhanced the quality of intervention delivery, enabling professionals to work more effectively in partnership with children and families. It also demonstrates the service's continued commitment to embedding trauma-informed, Child First principles into everyday practice, ensuring that interventions are not only effective in reducing reoffending but are also experienced as supportive, respectful and empowering by the children we serve.

Since its conception Enhanced Case Management has been delivered to 24 of our most vulnerable and complex children and to date 21 have not gone on to offend or reoffend. Given this, Enhanced Case Management will continue within Wirral for those young people who will benefit from the intervention.

The Trauma Action Plan is attached at Appendix 9. The Plan is reviewed at regular intervals, with oversight from the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB).

The voice of the child

Wirral Youth Justice Service (WYJS) is firmly committed to a Child First approach, placing the voice, experience and participation of children, families and harmed people at the centre of all practice. We recognise that meaningful participation is critical to building trust, improving engagement and achieving lasting positive change away from offending behaviour. As such, children are not passive recipients of services but active partners in shaping their own journeys and influencing service design.

Children's voices are embedded throughout assessment, planning and intervention delivery. They co-produce their plans, ensuring these reflect their strengths, needs, aspirations and motivations. Participation is systematically captured through tools such as Survey Monkey, anonymised case studies, case presentations and our peer mentors' provision to the Youth Justice Management Board, ensuring lived experience directly informs strategic decision-making and continuous service improvement.

Since 2023, feedback from children has driven a range of tangible improvements. Communication has been simplified to reduce professional jargon, reports have been redesigned to be more accessible, and child-friendly, trauma-informed spaces have been developed across our estate. The expansion of activity-based interventions and social prescribing offers, including sport, creative arts, music and mentoring, ensures engagement is meaningful, relevant and strengths-based. These developments reflect a clear shift towards relationship-based practice, where children feel listened to, understood and supported.

Our participation work is further strengthened through wider engagement with groups such as the Youth Voice Forum, Leaving Care Council, SEND Youth Voice and Youth Arts programmes, ensuring diverse perspectives are captured. This is complemented by strong collaboration across partnership arrangements, aligning with corporate priorities and enabling a whole-system response to need.

The impact of this approach is evidenced through consistently positive feedback from children, families and volunteers. The majority of children report feeling listened to, supported and more confident in making positive choices. Outcomes data demonstrates high levels of engagement, improved understanding of behaviour, and a significant reduction in reoffending. Feedback from families highlights the importance of trusted relationships with practitioners, with many recognising the difference this has made to their child's progress and wellbeing.

The voices of harmed people are also integral to our work. A dedicated victim specialist practitioner ensures their experiences are heard and responded to through direct engagement, feedback mechanisms and co-production within assessments and plans. Tailored, trauma-informed support, including access to interventions such as art therapy, ensures harmed people feel supported, respected and included, contributing to more effective restorative outcomes.

Participation continues to drive innovation within the service. Initiatives such as the Creative Youth Rap Project, Girls Group and In the Zone have been shaped by children's experiences and feedback. Creative and preventative programmes including, provide opportunities for children to express themselves, build resilience and influence their peers.

Inspection findings have further validated this approach, with participation and engagement identified as a key strength. Children and families reported that their voices matter and are acted upon, demonstrating a strong culture of co-production and relational practice across the service.

Wirral YJS remains committed to strengthening participation as a cornerstone of our practice. By continuing to listen, respond and adapt to the voices of children, families and harmed people, we will further improve outcomes, reduce offending, and support children to achieve safer, healthier and more positive futures. (Appendix 6: Participation and Engagement Report 2025-26).

Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements

Wirral's multi-agency Youth Justice Service sits within the Children and Young Person Department within the Harm Outside the Home (Contextual Safeguarding) area. This has helped develop the 'Children First' vision and ethos, with the YJS leadership team working closely with the specialist child exploitation and missing service, youth workers, drugs/alcohol service, counselling service/drop in and other Harm Outside the Home safeguarding colleagues. In addition, to this the service also links in and works alongside the Multi-disciplinary Teams across Wirral, to ensure that teams have access to the support and guidance from a Youth Justice Manager as and when required.

The Harm Outside the Home Service is part of Children's Service's Early Help and Prevention structure. Under the Director, the service sits alongside Early Childhood Services, Family Matters Services, and wider community-based youth and family support. The Youth Justice Service within this context is strengthened through a consistent and appropriate network of services.

As part of the Children's Services Directorate, the priorities of the YJS are meaningfully shared and included in the departmental performance reports that are subject to scrutiny from the Children, Young People and Education Committee. The Executive Director of People also leads the Management Board as chair.

The YJS staffing and Management structure for Wirral is attached as Appendix 1.

The strategic aims of the Wirral Youth Justice Service align to those of the National Youth Justice Board (YJB) and support those contained within the Wirral's Corporate Plan 2023-27. We aim to ensure that we have both the capacity and capability to achieve these aims by ensuring that all statutory partner agencies are strongly represented and actively engaged through the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) at a senior level.

Wirral Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) meets on a quarterly basis and in addition to statutory partners, has representatives from CYPMHS, SEND, Community Safety Partnership and Housing.

All the current members of Wirral Youth Justice Board and their attendance at the quarterly board meetings is reported as one of the KPI's to the YJB.

The Wirral Youth Justice Management Board developed fresh Terms of Reference in 2021 which were then reviewed in 2023, 2025 and 2026, alongside the strategic and Operational plan. Members of the Board have been inducted to the Board and understand the responsibilities that come with being a member.

Over the past four years we have had a consistent representation of board members from partner agencies. This has led to a more cohesive and mature board. Where colleagues have moved roles, new members have been inducted.

The role of the YJMB is to:

- To provide leadership and oversight of Youth Justice Service.
- To contribute to local multi-agency strategies and work with local and national criminal justice organisations.
- To safeguard children and young people who receive youth justice services.

The WYJMB's overall objectives are to:

- Provide a strategic overview of the work of the Youth Justice Service, to include oversight of serious incidents.
- Promote positive outcomes in the context of the youth justice system and services to children and young people.
- Agree, monitor, and review the implementation of the annual Youth Justice Plan and ensure co-ordination between the Youth Justice Plan and plans and strategies of partner agencies.
- Receive a structured analysis of performance and identify and monitor those measures where steps need to be taken to improve performance.
- Provide support and guidance to the Youth Justice Service to ensure it engages with local and national priorities, promotes race equality, and maintains diversity.
- Agree an annual budget, including in-kind contributions and to provide support for additional targeted funding to meet identified and agreed need.

- Support, challenge, and oversee the performance of the Youth Justice Service, provide strategic guidance, and hold the Service Manager to account for the work of the Service, when necessary.
- Agree the form and structure of protocols, contracts and Service Level Agreements between the Youth Justice Service and partner agencies.
- Provide a forum for the discussion of community issues which impact upon or are affected by the work of the Youth Justice Service.
- To provide a forum for the exchange of Youth Justice information between partners and the Youth Justice Service, to promote a pro-active approach to partnership working.
- To review, monitor and evaluate service information to ensure that the Youth Justice Service is contributing to improving outcomes for children, young people and the community.

Board Developments

The Wirral Youth Justice Management Board aligns with the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), providing a comprehensive understanding of factors critical to the youth justice system. Over the past five years, the Board has prioritised cultural competence, integrating it into our strategic framework.

Board members actively contribute to the annual planning cycle, identifying progress and priorities during strategic plan reviews. Development days have been held to support these efforts, ensuring alignment with our goal of delivering a high-quality, personalised, and responsive service for all children.

In April 2026, the Board reviewed achievements over the previous 18 months, focusing on maintaining a child-first, effective service. Key outcomes included:

- **Enhanced Thematic Reporting:** Strengthened reporting processes to better demonstrate impact and outcomes, incorporating the voice of children and peer mentors directly into Board discussions via attendance or films, alongside a review and refinement of the RAG rating framework.
- **Harmed Persons Data Development:** Continued improvement in the tracking, analysis, and reporting of data relating to harmed individuals to ensure their needs are better understood and responded to.
- **Risk Register Review:** Ongoing refinement of the risk register to broaden its scope, ensuring both risks and emerging issues are captured, and to clearly differentiate between performance-related risks and risks impacting service delivery.

The Board remains committed to leveraging YJB KPIs, cultural competence, and collaborative partnerships to deliver a responsive, child-first youth justice service. These efforts ensure continuous improvement, effective resource allocation, and enhanced outcomes for children and harmed individuals in Wirral.

Progress on previous plan

HMIP inspection 2025 (Priority 1 – 2025/26)

Following the HMIP inspection undertaken in April 2025, Wirral Youth Justice Service was assessed as Good overall**,** with particular strengths identified in planning, which was rated Outstanding**,** and delivery, which was rated Good**,** alongside areas requiring further development in assessing and victim work.

The inspection highlighted a strong foundation of child-centred practice within the service. Assessments were recognised as insightful and tailored, drawing on a wide range of information sources, including the voices of children, parents, and carers. There is clear evidence of meaningful engagement and co-production, with children actively influencing both their individual plans and the wider development of services. Practitioners consistently develop trusting and effective relationships, adapting their work to meet individual need, which underpins the service's strengths.

Planning was identified as a key area of excellence, described as holistic, strengths-based, and consistently of a high standard. This is supported by strong multi-agency partnership working across health, education, substance misuse, and exploitation services. Delivery is further enhanced through a number of innovative approaches, including community-based hubs such as the Pilgrim Street model, mentoring interventions, and the development of an adolescent harm-outside-the-home framework. Sustained investment in prevention and diversion has contributed to reduced first-time entrants and supports an evidence-led response to issues such as exploitation, county lines activity, and youth violence.

The service demonstrates strong use of local intelligence and data to inform decision-making, contributing to its positive position within the Youth Justice Board (YJB) performance framework. There is also a clear strategic focus on addressing disproportionality and meeting the needs of children with protected characteristics, supported by robust management board oversight and ongoing monitoring. Practice reflects a strong understanding of SEND, trauma-informed approaches, and neurodiversity, aligning with the service's wider priorities around inclusion and equity.

Alongside these strengths, the inspection identified six areas for improvement, including the need to further strengthen the consistency and depth of assessment practice, particularly in analysing children's vulnerability and risk to others. Victim work was also identified as an area for further development, with variability in practice and opportunities to improve consistency, engagement, and partnership working.

In response, Wirral YJS has delivered a comprehensive and ambitious action plan over the past 12 months, demonstrating strong and timely progress. Improvements in assessment and risk management have included the introduction of structured safety planning templates, enhanced risk assessment guidance, and strengthened quality assurance processes, supported by a detailed audit of inspected cases and regular management oversight. These developments have been reinforced through an extensive workforce development programme, including trauma-informed practice, Safety Building training, and restorative justice and safeguarding training, contributing to more consistent and robust risk analysis.

Significant progress has also been made in strengthening victim practice, supported by the implementation of the Childview/CACI system, which has improved case recording and the identification of harmed persons. New supervision and oversight processes have increased consistency and managerial scrutiny, while a Merseyside-wide review of the victim and restorative justice policy has strengthened alignment across partners. The introduction of non-consent tracking and improved diversity data pathways has enhanced understanding of victim needs, alongside improved partnership arrangements, particularly with probation victim liaison services.

Governance and oversight arrangements have also been strengthened, with more structured reporting to the Youth Justice Management Board and the introduction of thematic reviews to provide greater insight into performance and practice. The establishment of a dedicated victim champion role has further elevated the focus on victim work across the partnership.

Progress has also been made in strengthening data and performance systems, including improved data sharing with Merseyside Police and the implementation of victim data pathways. Work to fully embed a comprehensive victim performance dashboard is ongoing, recognising that this forms part of a longer-term improvement cycle following system upgrades.

Overall, the progress made over the past 12 months demonstrates a strong and proactive response to the HMIP inspection. The majority of actions have been completed or are well advanced, resulting in strengthened practice, improved governance, and more effective partnership working. (Appendix 14: HMIP Improvement Action Plans)

Harmed People/Person and Restorative Practice (Priority 2 – 2025/26)
Over the past four years, Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) has made strong progress in developing its approach to supporting harmed people and embedding restorative practice across the partnership. Since 2023, this has included expanding victim processes, increased contact, and broadening the restorative offer, supported by investment in specialist roles, workforce development, and a system-wide approach across Wirral.

Partnership working has been a key driver, with restorative practice training delivered widely to equip practitioners across services. As a result, a range of interventions is now available, including victim empathy work, letters of apology, shuttle mediation, reparation, and restorative conferences, alongside tailored support and signposting to meet individual needs.

There is clear evidence of increased activity within the victim offer, with commonly used approaches including shuttle mediation and letters of apology, supported by wider interventions such as mentoring and therapeutic support. Strengthened governance following the 2025 HMIP inspection has also led to improved recording through Childview, the introduction of new safeguarding and oversight processes, and stronger partnership arrangements, including links with probation victim liaison services. Data capture and understanding of victim characteristics have also improved, alongside greater use of feedback to inform practice.

However, consistent with HMIP findings, further development is required. Victim engagement remains variable, with some individuals declining or not responding to contact, and practice is not yet fully consistent across all areas. As such, this remains a priority for 2026/27, with a continued focus on embedding a high-quality, trauma-informed and personalised approach.

Moving forward, Wirral YJS will prioritise ensuring that all harmed people receive a timely, consistent service, that their needs and characteristics are fully understood, and that they are offered meaningful opportunities to engage in restorative processes. This will be supported through continued investment in workforce development, improved data and performance systems, and strengthened governance to further improve outcomes for victims, children, and communities. (Appendix 5: victim report 2025-26)

Early Intervention and Prevention (Priority 3 – 2025/26)

Early Intervention and Prevention will remain a core priority within this year's Youth Justice Service Plan. Over the past four years, the Turnaround Programme has enabled Wirral YJS to deliver targeted, evidence-based support to children identified as being on the cusp of entering the criminal justice system, addressing underlying needs and reducing risk factors.

Initially funded by the Ministry of Justice for three years and extended for a further year, the programme has allowed the service to work intensively with children presenting specific risk markers, supporting them to avoid entering the criminal justice system. Strong partnership working across Early Help, Social Care, Education, Police and YJS has ensured early identification and coordinated intervention, including reaching children subject to Child Protection Plans and those who are Looked After.

Outcomes from the programme demonstrate reduced escalation into offending, with any subsequent offences being predominantly low-level, reinforcing the effectiveness of a preventative approach.

In June 2026, the Youth Justice Management Board supported the permanent restructure of the Turnaround programme within Wirral YJS in recognition of its impact, at a time when future Ministry of Justice funding was uncertain. This was further strengthened through additional Public Health investment to enhance delivery over the next two years, supported by an options paper presented to the Board. Subsequently, in January 2026, the Ministry of Justice confirmed continued funding for a further three years due to the strong outcomes achieved. This will allow more children and young people to benefit from the programme in the coming years.

As a result, there is now a clear opportunity to embed and sustain this model of early intervention within core service delivery. Our priority moving forward is to:

- Identify children at risk as early as possible through effective partnership working

- Deliver child-centred, trauma-informed and strengths-based interventions
- Improve access to education, training and meaningful activities
- Integrate prevention pathways across wider safeguarding and community services

Through continued system leadership and operational delivery, Wirral YJS aims to reduce the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system and improve long-term outcomes for children and young people. **(**Appendix 5: prevention report 2025-26)

Peer mentoring programme (Priority 4 – 2025/26)

A key priority during 2025–26 has been the continued development of the Peer Mentoring initiative, enabling young people to act as positive role models and support at-risk peers away from serious violence and offending. Through structured training, community delivery, and strong partnership working, the programme has established an effective peer-led prevention model.

The Peer Educator Project delivered strongly against YJS priorities, recruiting and training six peer mentors (one early withdrawal) who engaged approximately 268 at-risk young people through targeted interventions including the Turnaround programme, the Cycle Project, rap sessions, mental health drop-ins and detached youth work. These approaches have built trusted relationships, supported personal development and increased engagement in positive pathways, with early evidence of reduced risk behaviours and strong partner feedback.

Additional funding from Community Safety/Violence Reduction Partnership and Operation Stoneheaven for 2026/27 has secured continuation of the programme, with existing mentors transitioning into peer educator roles to train and support new cohorts. This is further strengthened through Harm Outside the Home investment, funding two apprenticeship roles over two years for peer mentors to work at a prevention level with children in the justice system. Peer mentors are also now developing as sessional workers across the Youth Service and YJS, expanding delivery capacity.

Moving forward, the service will expand recruitment and training, strengthen early identification through partners, embed peer-led approaches within diversion pathways, and create progression opportunities into employment and leadership roles ensuring a sustainable model that continues to reduce offending and improve outcomes for children and young people. (Appendix 6: Annual Peer Mentoring Report 2025-26).

Sliding Doors programme (Priority 5 – 2025/26)
Wirral YJS successfully secured £20,000 in funding to develop an innovative film-based intervention package as part of the Harm Outside the Home initiative. During 2025–26, this funding supported the production of five short films, created in partnership with a professional film company.

The films centre on the lived experiences of children and young people known to the service, who courageously shared their personal journeys relating to issues such as ketamine misuse, knife crime, domestic abuse and wider substance misuse. Each film has been carefully designed to highlight opportunities for diversion, reinforce positive choices, and promote pathways away from harm.

The project was formally completed with a Red-Carpet Premiere event held in March/April 2026, marking a significant milestone. This event was a powerful celebration of creativity, collaboration and the voices of our young people. Wirral's peer mentors, supported by the Harm Outside the Home Service, delivered honest and deeply moving reflections. Their willingness to transform their experiences into messages of hope demonstrated exceptional courage and resilience.

The films not only captured these personal stories but also showcased the positive progress made by the young people involved, underlining the impact of early intervention, prevention, and supportive services.

As a legacy of the project, the films will now be embedded as part of targeted intervention delivery across schools and youth settings. Importantly, the young people whose stories are featured will play an active role in delivering these sessions, using their lived experience to engage peers, encourage reflection, and support others to make safer, more positive choices.

This project represents a strong example of Child First, trauma-informed practice in action amplifying young people's voices, promoting resilience, and strengthening prevention pathways across Wirral.

Resources and Services

Appendix 4, Table 1 'Partner Contributions to the Youth Offending Partnership Pooled Budget' shows the financial, staffing, and contributions made by local partners. In addition, the Wirral YJS Structure chart (Staffing Chart 'B7 & B8' Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) highlights the staffing information in relation to organisation, gender, and ethnicity.

Our performance is expected to continue improving through the delivery of a broader range of targeted activities and specialist interventions across the Wirral footprint. This includes programmes such as Harmful Sexual Behaviour, the Child to Adult Violence programme, Early Help, and Prevention Meetings, alongside the effective use of extended Pathfinders funding. Trauma-informed development remains a core and embedded element of service delivery.

Alongside maintaining its core statutory responsibilities, the service has also progressed several priority areas. These include the 'In the Zone' programme within secondary schools, the Ketamine response programme in collaboration with NHS England, and the continued development of innovative initiatives such as the Sliding Doors programme, the peer mentoring service, and enhanced support through the Turnaround programme.

The YJB grant also supports ongoing staff training for general development and responding to new themes and issues. This includes the Cross-Training Group (CTG) training plan for 2026/27 which was agreed by Greater Merseyside Youth Justice Managers and recognises the refresher training and emerging training needs of YJS staff for the coming year and beyond. In addition, Wirral also has specific local issues and training plans which the grant supports and various in-house training courses. Appendix Training Plan 11.

Wirral YJS continues to be funded through contributions from its statutory partners, including the Council, Health, Police and Probation. While Probation funding has remained consistent with the previous financial year, Public Health investment has increased to further support prevention services within the YJS.

Although the Community Partnership withdrew its funding in 2024, it has since agreed to provide a further 12 months of funding in 2026/27 via the Violent Reduction Funding to support the peer mentoring programme. The allocation of an additional three years of Turnaround funding from the Home Office has helped to mitigate the potential impact of this earlier reduction and sustain service performance.

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) is responsible for managing the Local Authority budget allocated to meet the costs of young people remanded to the secure estate under the provisions of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

For 2025/26, the allocation received was £56,606. During this period, Wirral experienced several cases where children were remanded for offences committed more than 12 months prior to their release on licence in the community. These cases related to specified and serious specified offences, significantly increasing overall remand costs.
As a result, total remand expenditure for the 12-month period reached £255,229, resulting in a substantial overspend against the available allocation. This overspend has been mitigated through the use of remand reserves for the second consecutive year. These reserves had been set aside in anticipation of the volatile and unpredictable nature of remand costs.

If expenditure patterns in 2026/27 mirror those experienced in the previous year, it is unlikely that the remand allocation alone will be sufficient to meet demand. Remaining remand reserves are now limited, increasing financial risk. The Youth Justice Board remand allocation for 2026/27 for Wirral Youth Justice Service is £55,407.

We continue to maintain a strong partnership with Career Connect (formerly Connexions), with Career Connect staff embedded within the YJS. The service also benefits from a dedicated Health contribution to support substance misuse and prevention interventions. Oversight of YJS health provision is provided by three named Contextual Safeguarding Nurses.

Wirral YJS is further strengthened through a multi-agency workforce, including a seconded Probation Officer for two and a half days per week and two full-time Police Youth Intervention Officers. In addition, the service has access to an Educational Psychologist (EP) for one and a half days per week. The EP provides coaching to staff and supports both Trauma-Informed interventions and Enhanced Case Management. We also benefit from access to a single point of contact (SPOC) for SEND, ensuring that any concerns or barriers are identified and addressed promptly.

The current pathway into Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) for children involved in youth justice is accessed through the BRANCH referral mechanism. This is complemented by a range of youth provision across Wirral, including Participation and Engagement groups, girls' groups, arts-based interventions, and counselling services, delivered through the Youth Service under the Harm Outside the Home framework.

Wirral YJS has identified a gap in the provision of speech and language support for children within the service. This has been formally recognised within the Youth Justice Management Board risk register. In response, a detailed report outlining the level of need has been submitted to Wirral's Children, Families and Education Commissioning Service to inform future service development.

Wirral YJS continues to comply with the minimum staffing requirements set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Partnership Arrangements

The YJMB has continued to place great emphasis on the role of strong partnership working and shared ownership of the youth justice performance targets and service delivery. Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) is represented on all major strategic partnerships including the Wirral Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Safer Wirral Partnership Board, the Partnership for Children, Young People and Families, Domestic Abuse Alliance Partnership Board, and the Channel Panel for radicalisation/extremism.

Wirral's YJS Service Manager sits on the Merseyside Criminal Justice Board (MCJB) and feeds back to the Pan Merseyside YJS Managers. The YJS Service Manager also chairs on the Youth Performance Improvement Group and leads on a number of MCJB workstreams including the strategic domestic violence & abuse group, victims/restorative justice group, disproportionality board and youth detention scrutiny on behalf of Merseyside YJSs. The YJS Service Manager also attends the Community Safety Partnership Board and the Prevent & Channel Panel. Other Youth Justice leads across Merseyside attend various other partnership meetings and feedback through the Heads of Service YJS managers meetings these include Out of Court Scrutiny Panel, Strategic MACE, Merseyside MAPPA meetings to name a few.

Within Wirral Council, the Director of Children's, Families and Education Services is the YJMB Chair and maintains strong links across a wide range of strategic boards including Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Board, Safer Wirral Partnership Board, Partnership for Children, Young People and Families, Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Chair of the Board further ensures strong and effective stakeholder engagement and effective partnership working links and networks, which serve to strengthen and challenge the multi-agency working arrangements that support the Youth Justice Service. Additionally, The Head of Service for Contextual Safeguarding who has oversight and direct line management of the Service Manager for Youth Justice and Youth Justice Service leads the Wirral Safeguarding Partnership Harm Outside the Home Safeguarding Committee and is the thematic lead for Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership's Safer Adolescence Strategy. The Head of Service also co-chairs the local Multi-Agency Child Exploitation panel, linking into Merseyside and regional forums for child exploitation, county lines and wider harm outside the home safeguarding development and in addition chairs the Channel and Prevent Panel, further strengthening the links across closely associated forums within safeguarding, community safety and youth justice.

All of the above shows that YJ service is represented throughout the partnership and highlights how Wirral makes best use of its resources pooled budgets and partnership arrangements to effectively respond to the issues and needs of young people who find themselves part of the Criminal Justice System.

Prevention and Early Intervention remain paramount to the work of Wirral YJS. The aspiration is that by working across local partners, young people who may benefit from support are recognised and supported at an early stage, being referred, and considered for prevention interventions.

The prevention offer has been developed to meet different needs of young people, sharing well developed operational links across local organisations and agencies and will be further invested in by the priorities identified in this year's annual plan.

The YJS Business Manager provides data to enable early identification of families which may fit the criteria for the Supporting Families programme. Additionally, data is provided to monitor the Wirral Supporting Families Outcomes Plan and the Breaking the Cycle Programme (BTC) Outcomes Plan. For example, reductions in re-offending and reductions in anti-social behaviour. Additionally, the Youth Justice Service also provides data for the Wirral Children's Safeguarding Effectiveness Committee, Harm Outside the Home Committee and WSCP practice review committee where the Service Manager presents feedback on themes and trends, highlighting challenges and good practice. Headline Youth Justice performance is also presented to elected members and scrutinised via the committee for Children, Young People and Education.

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) currently holds the Restorative Practice Quality Mark awarded by the Restorative Justice Council. The service remains committed to upholding the high standards set by this accreditation and to further strengthening positive restorative outcomes, both within YJS and in collaboration with partner agencies. In addition, through strong partnership working, Wirral has achieved the SEND Quality Mark and has been recognised with a 'Child First' commendation from the Association for Youth Justice (AYM).

Challenges, risks, and issues

Wirral YJS will strengthen its response to challenge, risk and escalating harm in line with the Youth Justice White Paper, ensuring early identification of risk is matched by timely, proportionate and decisive intervention to protect victims and the public. The service will reinforce that avoiding unnecessary criminalisation does not equate to inaction, maintaining a strong grip on persistent behaviour through robust multi-agency planning, clear ownership of risk, and targeted responses to serious violence, exploitation and other harmful behaviours. This will be supported by improved information sharing, professional curiosity and accountability across partners to prevent children falling through gaps as risks escalate.

The service continues to operate within a challenging financial climate, with ongoing austerity pressures impacting the ability to sustain prevention and early intervention activity. Reliance on short-term funding streams presents a risk to the continuity of provision, potentially increasing future demand within the justice system. Remand budgets are also under pressure, creating financial risk where custodial placements are required, although regional work to develop alternative provision and reduce remand usage is underway.

Children presenting to Wirral YJS have increasingly complex and overlapping needs, including trauma, mental health difficulties and high levels of SEND. Nationally and locally, SEND provision in Wirral is undergoing significant reform following the Every Child Aching and Thriving White Paper and SEND Reform consultation, through which the Local Area SEND Partnership Board are developing SEND Reform Plans aligned to local need, including the youth justice cohort, and progressing a Priority Action Plan to improve assessment timeliness, EHCP quality, and transitions into adulthood. Gaps in key services, particularly speech and language provision, remain a significant pressure and have been escalated through the Management Board risk register. These challenges are reflective of wider system pressures across children's services, early help and health provision.

National policy developments, including the Youth Justice White Paper, are likely to increase expectations on youth justice services to deliver improved outcomes and earlier intervention; however, there remains a risk that these expectations are not matched by sustainable funding or aligned system capacity.

The service must also continue to respond to HMIP improvement actions while managing increasing operational demand. This places additional pressure on workforce capacity and requires a sustained focus on quality assurance, workforce development and robust management oversight to ensure safe, effective and consistent practice.

Performance and Standards for Children

The YJMB continues to monitor performance through quarterly quantitative and qualitative reports. The Wirral Youth Justice Service managers convene monthly meetings to support operational delivery against the YJS priorities. As well as Professional Development Meeting with the full service to look at themes, data and professional development.

In addition to the key performance data presented to the Board, the Board also looks at a specific dashboard and the core quality assurance of cases conducted by YJS staff. The YJS Operational Managers have undertaken 12 deep dive audits on priority themes and reported back through the YJMB under performance management. Where needed small working groups and action plans have been devised and implemented to improve outcomes following the audits.

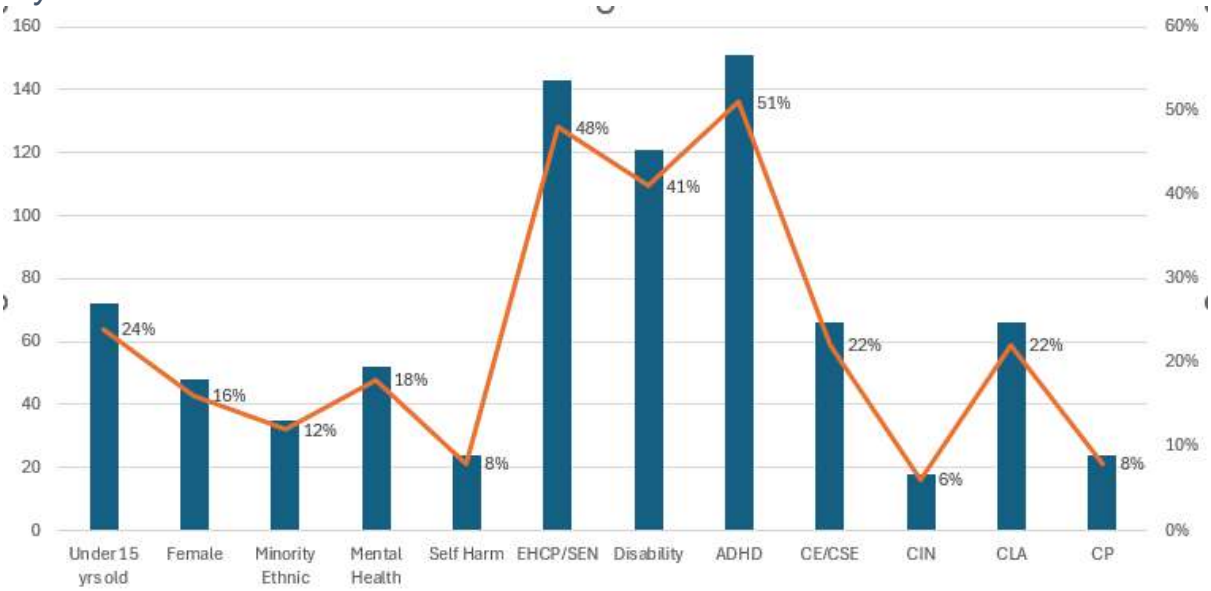
The dashboard data presented quarterly to the Board are as follows:

- Overall performance using local data
- Out of Court Resolutions
- Prevention cases
- Statutory cases
- Key Indicators
- Equality, Diversity and Disproportionality
- Education, Training & Employment
- Harmed people
- Key characteristics and event characteristics

Key themes emerging from the dashboards presented to the Youth Justice Management Board include:

- **Community Resolutions**: In 2025/26, Community Resolutions continued to decline as Outcome 22 became fully integrated into the service.
- **Out of Court Resolutions**: Operation Inclusion was utilised in 23 cases for High Police Gravity Matrix offences, helping to reduce first-time entries into the Criminal Justice System.
- **Supporting Vulnerabilities**: We continue to work with children facing diverse challenges, including disabilities, ADHD, speech, language, and communication difficulties, mental health issues, and emotional wellbeing concerns.
- **Criminal Exploitation**: Several children were identified as at risk of criminal exploitation, with multiple National Referral Mechanism (NRM) conclusive grounds outcomes.
- **ADHD**: There has been a notable rise in the number of children identified with ADHD.

Key themes of children's characteristics:



Key Observation
The "ADHD" category has the highest representation at 51%, followed by "EHCP/SEN" at 48%.

The quarterly performance report presented at the YJMB includes the full details of all performance areas with the dashboards giving us a quick glance at data to immediately highlight any themes or increases.

- **Ongoing Development**: The dashboard is being developed to align with new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) following the 2025 HMIP inspection. We aim to fully integrate it into the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board within the next 12 months.
- **Quality Assurance**: The KPIs will support in-depth Quality Assurance reviews, establishing a baseline for improving quality and refining processes.
- **Data Challenges**: Issues with quarterly reporting and data extraction from the Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF) for the new KPIs persist. We anticipate resolution by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), enabling accurate data presentation to the Board in the future.

Quality Assurance and Oversight
The areas of Quality assurance that have been covered over the past twelve months are:

1) Risk of Harm to Others
2) Safeguarding
3) Turnaround
4) Prevention
5) Participation and Engagement
6) Victims/harmed people
7) Referrals and Reoffending
8) Out of Court Resolutions
9) First Time Entrance
10) Minority Group
11) Girls in the Justice System
12) Diversity, Neurodiversity and Disproportionality

All twelve deep dive audits have been presented at the Youth Justice Management Board for discussion and recommended actions on areas that can be improved. Progress is tracked through YJMB review and within the WYJS management meetings.

Outcomes from the each deep dive have been written up as action plans. The action plans are presented to the next YJMB.

Whilst all managers and staff are responsible for quality assuring their own practice, Wirral YJS has identified a dedicated Team Manager to work alongside the Business Manager to review and strengthen practice where needed. Following the recent HMIP inspection, the Service Manager also undertakes reviews of four cases every six weeks to support ongoing re-quality assurance. This approach supports continuous improvement across the service, informs workforce training plans, and ensures that areas of good practice are identified and shared with all staff. Appendix 10 will show a detailed report of the findings from the internal Audits/Reports completed following the Quality Assurance themed deep dive.

Six more themes will be chosen in the next 12 months, identified through the YJMB members, feedback and data insight. Throughout 2025/26 performance has been reported on a quarterly basis to the YJMB and quarterly contact with the YJB's North-West Business Area Local Partnership Advisor has been maintained to identify and address key areas of performance.

In addition to the Youth Justice Key Performance Indicators, Wirral YJS also have local performance measures in place for re-offending rates following Out of Court Resolutions and offending by Children Looked After.

Reducing the Number of First Time Entrants
The long-term trend shows a decline in first-time entrants to the criminal justice system. In Wirral, this reduction is primarily driven by the effective use of Out of Court Resolutions by Merseyside Police.

Out of Court Resolutions serve as an alternative to formal criminal justice proceedings, focusing on diverting young people away from the system. This strategy includes:

- **Assessment**: A tailored evaluation to understand the individual's circumstances and needs.
- **Intervention**: A targeted, short-term programmes designed to address specific behaviours and prevent further offending.

First Time Entrants	Date	YJS Performance rate
Number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system (per 100,000 of 10-17 population)	April to March 2025 April to March 2026	150 (48 young people) 141 (45 young people)

Source: YDS version 126

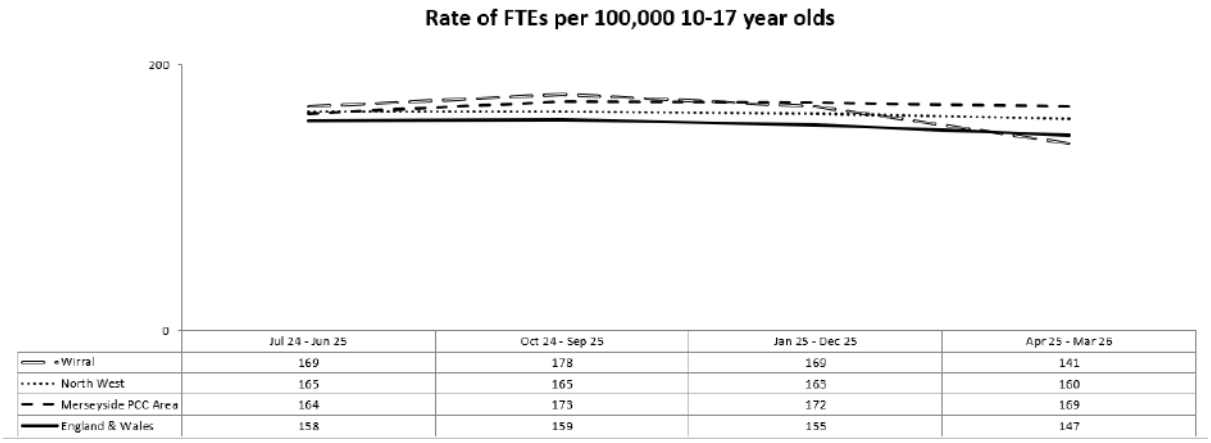
Between April 2024 and March 2025, the rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Wirral was 150 per 100,000 of the 10–17 population, representing a total of 48 children.

This reduced in April 2025 to March 2026, with the rate falling to 141 per 100,000, equating to 45 children entering the system for the first time.

This indicates a modest but positive reduction in both the rate and the number of first-time entrants over the 12-month period.

To further reduce youth offending and prevent first-time entrants into the criminal justice system, Wirral will prioritise the strengthening and expansion of prevention and diversionary approaches. A particular focus will be on consolidating the progress achieved in 2025, including embedding the Turnaround programme as a sustainable, permanent service.

- **Permanent Turnaround Programme (from 2025):** The Turnaround programme is now established as a core, ongoing service across Wirral, providing consistent early intervention and support to children at risk of entering the justice system. Confirmed Ministry of Justice funding over the next three years will enable further expansion, increasing the programme's reach and impact for Wirral children.
- **No Comment Pathway Expansion:** In 2025, the scope of the No Comment Pathway was broadened to include a wider range of offences. This has enabled more children to access diversionary support at an earlier stage, reducing progression into formal justice processes.
- **Operation Inclusion:** Accredited by Liverpool John Moores University, Operation Inclusion provides a structured deferred prosecution model, delivering an intensive 3–6-month intervention. Early evidence indicates that very few children re-enter the justice system following completion, demonstrating strong outcomes for sustainable diversion.
- **Data-Driven Monitoring:** Quarterly Case Level Data will be utilised to monitor trends in first-time entrants and inform responsive, evidence-based adjustments to prevention and diversion strategies.
- **Custody Navigators:** A priority for this year is the continued development of Custody Navigator provision, ensuring children receive timely support when in police custody and throughout the investigation phase, promoting engagement and diversion at the earliest opportunity.
- **Wirral Young Futures Prevention Panel:** Another key priority is the establishment of a multi-agency prevention panel to identify and support children at risk of anti-social behaviour or offending, ensuring coordinated and timely interventions across partner agencies.



	Jul 24 - Jun 25	Oct 24 - Sep 25	Jan 25 - Dec 25	Apr 25 - Mar 26
Wirral	169	178	169	141
North West	165	165	163	160
Merseyside PCC Area	164	173	172	169
England & Wales	158	159	155	147

Source: YDS version 126

The Merseyside average is an increase of 1.8% and the National average is a decrease of 7.6% in FTE's frequency rates. However, Wirral Youth Justice service remains below the Merseyside, Northwest and National average.

The priorities set since 2023 reflect the fact that Wirral is focused on Early Intervention and Prevention.

Merseyside is one of the few areas nationally to have embedded and well-established deferred prosecution model through Operation Inclusion, a programme designed to reduce the number of First-Time Entrants (FTEs) into the criminal justice system. Supported by the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and delivered in partnership with Merseyside Police and the Crown Prosecution Service, this initiative reflects a shared commitment across the region to intervene earlier, prevent escalation, and promote equitable outcomes for children and young people.

Initially developed and piloted in Wirral, Operation Inclusion demonstrated early and sustained success in diverting children away from formal prosecution, providing a strong evidence base to support its expansion across Merseyside over the past five years. More recently, the programme has received academic recognition through accreditation by Liverpool John Moores University, further strengthening its credibility as an evidence-informed model of good practice.

At its core, Operation Inclusion represents a shift away from a solely offence-led response towards a more holistic, child-focused approach. Through the deferred prosecution framework, eligible children are offered the opportunity to engage in a structured programme of support rather than progressing immediately to prosecution. This pathway is specifically targeted at children who would otherwise receive a first formal resolution, thereby disrupting the trajectory into the youth justice system at the earliest possible stage.

Interventions within Operation Inclusion typically take place over a period of three to six months and involve close engagement with the child and their family. Working collaboratively with Youth Justice Services and partner agencies, the programme focuses on addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour, including experiences of trauma, vulnerability, and unmet need. This whole-family, multi-agency

approach ensures that interventions are meaningful, proportionate, and responsive to the individual circumstances of each child.

Successful completion of the programme enables children to receive an out-of-court outcome without acquiring a criminal record, supporting their longer-term life chances and reducing the risk of further offending. Where engagement is not achieved, cases can be returned for further police decision-making, ensuring that the model maintains both integrity and accountability.

Overall, Operation Inclusion reflects a progressive and preventative approach to youth justice, placing children's needs, strengths, and potential at the centre of decision-making. Its continued development and expansion across Merseyside demonstrate the effectiveness of partnership-led, trauma-informed interventions in reducing first-time entry, improving outcomes, and contributing to safer communities.

In 2025/26, Operation Inclusion supported 23 young people, with only 2 reoffending to date.

The programme has also earned national recognition from the Howard League for Penal Reform, winning the "Community Award" in the "Policing and Children" category.

Operation Inclusion data

Overall	23 which breaks down to: 15 completed 2 not completed 6 in progress 2 have reoffended
Original Offences	12 POBA 1 Motoring 5 Violence 5 Offensive Weapon
Re-Referral at time of writing	1

The above table shows details of the number and outcomes to date for Operation Inclusion**.**

The No Comment Pathway (NCP), launched across Merseyside in June 2024 as a key priority within the 2024/25 Youth Justice Annual Plan, provides an additional entry point into the established Out-of-Court Resolutions (OOCR) framework. Developed in partnership with Merseyside Youth Justice Services, Merseyside Police, and the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), the pathway is specifically designed to address disproportionality within the youth justice system, with a particular focus on children from ethnically and culturally diverse communities, Children Looked After, and children with Special Educational Needs.

The NCP builds on the child-centred, trauma-informed approach embedded across Merseyside's prevention model. It enables cases where a child has provided a "no comment" interview, but where the evidential threshold for charge is met, to be referred to Youth Justice Services rather than progressing immediately through formal prosecution. This approach ensures that decisions are not solely based on PACE

interview outcomes but are instead informed by a full understanding of the child's circumstances, risks, and needs through multi-agency assessment and OOCR panel consideration.

The No Comment Pathway represents a significant system-wide shift from offence-led and interview-led decision-making towards a more holistic, child-first approach, ensuring that outcomes are informed by a comprehensive understanding of each child's context. This supports both local and national priorities to reduce disproportionality, improve fairness within the justice system, and promote positive, preventative outcomes for children and young people.

Over the past 24 months, nineteen children from Wirral have accessed the Merseyside OOCR Pathway through the NCP, with no instances of offending or reoffending recorded.

No Comment Pathway data

Overall	19 which breaks down to: 16 completed 3 in progress 0 Offended whilst on Intervention
Original Offences	10 POCD 2 Violence 2 Public Order 3 Theft 1 Sexual 1 Motoring

The Merseyside OOCR Scrutiny Panel incorporates representatives from Merseyside YJS Managers, Merseyside Police and Magistrates. The Scrutiny Panel examines and samples OOCR on a quarterly basis to ensure consistency of decision-making and suitability of resolutions across Merseyside.

Reducing Re-offending

This measure tracks a rolling cohort of young people who have committed an offence in a 12-month (aggregated quarterly cohorts) period for the subsequent 12 months to identify if they are proven to have re-offended. The data for this performance indicator is taken from the Ministry of Justice published data (using the Police National Computer data) and because of the methodology used there is delay in the time periods tracked and reported.

Binary Re-offending	Date	YJS Performance
Proven re-offending rate of young offenders. (Percentage of young people who have re-offended)	April 2022 – March 2023	35%
	April 2023 – March 2024	31%

Source: YDS version 126

The latest published data indicates ***4% reduction*** in the re-offending rates when comparing the above periods. It is, however, important to recognise the reduction in the cohort numbers and acknowledge that those who remain within the cohort are young people who may have more complex factors at play.

The actual **PNC** data for the Wirral **12-month** re-offending cohorts is presented below:

Re-offending rate cohort	April 2020 – March 2021	April 2021 – March 2022	April 2022 – March 2023	April 2023 – March 2024
Number in the cohort	68	46	40	58
Number of re-offenders	24	22	14	18
Number of re-offences	75	60	35	44
Average number of re-offences per re-offender	3.12	2.72	2.5	2.44
Frequency rate	1.1	1.3	0.87	0.73
Binary rate	35.3%	47.8%	35%	31%

Source: YDS version 126

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) recognises that it is increasingly working with a smaller but more complex cohort of older children, many of whom present with heightened risks and vulnerabilities to themselves and the wider community. Within this context, reducing reoffending identified as a priority by the Merseyside Criminal Justice Board (MCJB) remains a significant and shared challenge across the region.

The MCJB's Reducing Re-offending Strategy provides a clear framework for addressing these issues, with a particular focus on tackling persistent reoffending and strengthening the transition from youth to adult services. The strategy sets out a coordinated, multi-agency approach to reducing reoffending by:

- Promoting early identification and targeted intervention for those at highest risk
- Improving continuity of support during the transition into adult services
- Strengthening partnership working across youth justice, probation, police, health, and local authority services
- Embedding evidence-based, trauma-informed approaches to address the underlying causes of behaviour
- Using data and performance monitoring to track outcomes and drive service improvement

In response, Merseyside YJS Operational Managers have collaborated closely to translate this strategic direction into practice. This includes joint work to review and update the Transitions Protocol, ensuring clearer pathways, stronger information sharing, and more consistent support for young people moving into adult systems.

This partnership approach has also enabled services to share best practice, develop consistent standards across the region, and apply local learning to improve responses to reoffending. Collectively, this strengthens the ability of Wirral YJS and its partners to deliver coordinated, child-first, and outcome-focused interventions that aim to reduce reoffending and support positive long-term change.

Wirral YJS continues to address all aspects of a young person's behaviour, including attitudes toward harmful behaviour, victim awareness, restorative practices, targeted intervention programmes, peer influences, and contributing factors such as substance misuse, Education, Training and Employment (ETE), and emotional health and wellbeing. Many children are supported through wider child-focused plans, including Team Around the Family, Child in Need, Child Protection, and other multi-agency support arrangements. Those at highest risk of reoffending often receive additional support from the Family Matters Service, recognising the complexity of their needs and those of their families.

The Wirral YJS Management Team has placed reoffending at the centre of its intervention, management strategies, and annual auditing processes. This is supported through focused discussions within Case Management supervision, ensuring case managers actively address reoffending risks and adapt intervention plans accordingly. In addition, the team undertakes in-depth reviews of cases that return to Wirral YJS to identify learning and inform continuous service improvement.

Wirral YJS utilises the Youth Justice Board (YJB) re-offending live tracker tool to analyse current cohorts, identify re-offending trends, and track factors such as age, common re-offending offenses, and timing within an order. This data informs targeted action plans to address identified issues and reduce re-offending.

Reduce the Use of Custody

The use of custody indicator looks at the number of custodial disposals presented as a rate per 1,000 of the local general 10 –17-year-old population. This data will come from YJS's case-level data published in the Youth Justice Application Framework.

Use of Custody	Date	YJS Performance
Young people receiving a custodial sentence (per 1,000 of 10-17 population)	April 2024 to March 2025	0.13 (4 young people)
	April 2025 to March 2026	0.09 (3 young people)

Source: YDS version 126

Custodial sentences for children and young people are considered a last resort. Through collaboration with partner agencies, Wirral maintains a low rate of children entering custody. Between April 2025 and March 2026, 76 children across the Northwest received custodial sentences, with Wirral accounting for 3.9% of these cases.

Suitable Accommodation

The Local Authority's senior housing manager, a member of the Youth Justice Management Board, oversees the Key Performance Indicator for accommodation. They lead efforts to support young people exiting custody after serving custodial sentences. Through collaborative work with housing, youth justice, and social care teams, young

people are provided with supported placements or suitable accommodation upon release. This ensures that all young people remain in appropriate accommodation by the end of their intervention, promoting stability and successful reintegration.

Substance Misuse
Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) employs Tier 2 and Tier 3 staff trained to support young people with substance misuse issues. These staff maintain strong connections with Wirral's specialist Drug and Alcohol service, Response, to ensure ongoing training and professional development align with current challenges faced by Wirral's youth. Response is integrated into the YJS prevention programme and contributes to the 'In the Zone' school initiative. As both services operate within Children's Services, robust partnerships facilitate seamless support for young people during YJS interventions, as well as in exit and contingency planning, ensuring comprehensive care tailored to their needs.

Harmed person/s
Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) has further strengthened its victim support framework, building on the dedicated victim worker role introduced in the previous plan. The service has enhanced its application of Restorative Practice, with a clear focus on ensuring the voice of the harmed person is actively included within processes and interventions.

Progress from the previous plan has been clearly documented. This is reflected within both the "Progress on Previous Plan" section of the current Annual Plan and the accompanying victim report in the appendix. These highlight achievements over the past 12 months, alongside continued development and forward planning for work with harmed persons and restorative practice.

The specialist victim worker, working in collaboration with the thematic lead, monitors and reports on this key performance indicator (KPI). Quarterly performance data is presented to the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB), demonstrating continued development and strengthening of this area over the past year.

In addition, new pathways, processes and recording systems have been established. These align with the Victims' Code of Practice and promote consistency across Merseyside, supported by the establishment of a Merseyside-wide victim subgroup.

Education, Training, and Employment (ETE) and Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) has appointed a dedicated education worker to monitor and report on the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) related to educational outcomes, under the supervision of a lead responsible manager. In collaboration with education partners, Wirral YJS aims to support more young people into meaningful and suitable education and employment opportunities. The education worker partners closely with Careers Connect staff, reporting to the same manager, to deliver enhanced support for young people.

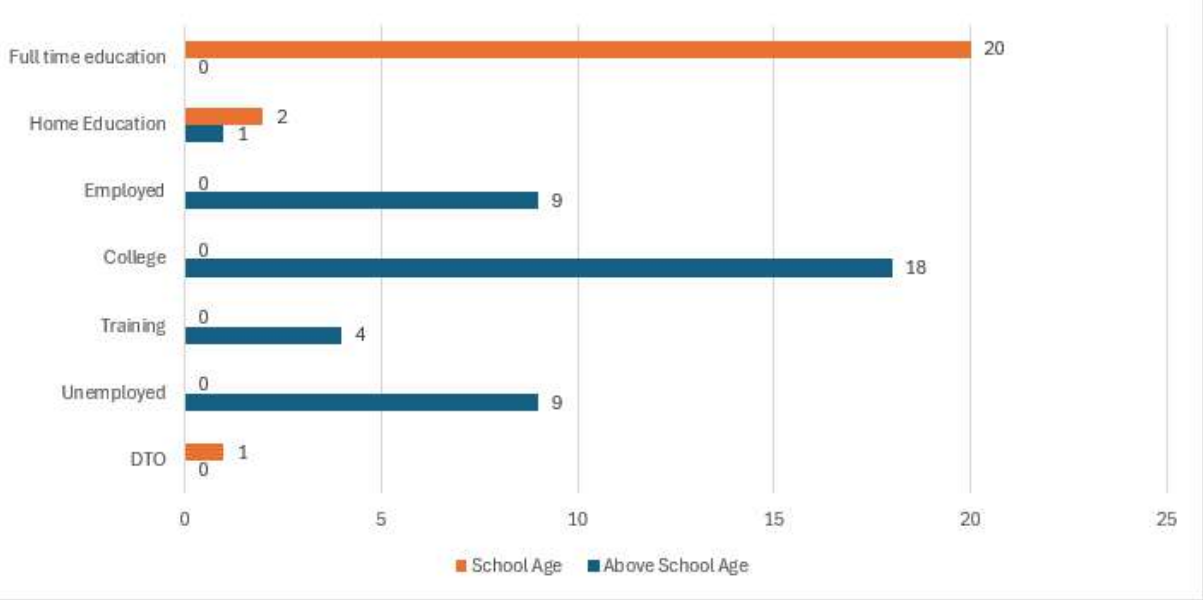
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities/Additional Learning Needs(SEND)
Nationally and locally, SEND provision in Wirral is undergoing significant reform following the *Every Child Aching and Thriving White Paper* and the SEND Reform consultation. In response, the Local Area SEND Partnership Board is developing comprehensive SEND Reform Plans aligned to local need, including the youth justice cohort, alongside delivery

of a Priority Action Plan focused on improving assessment timeliness, the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and transitions into adulthood.

Within the Youth Justice Service (YJS), a dedicated education worker supports delivery of key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to educational outcomes. Strong leadership from the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB), including the appointment of a SEND Assistant Director, has strengthened strategic oversight and expertise. A designated SEND Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is in place to address barriers to meeting the needs of children involved with the YJS. This coordinated approach has contributed to Wirral YJS achieving the AYM SEND Kite Mark in recent years.

Ongoing audits and analysis of the educational profiles and journeys of children engaged with the service are undertaken, with findings reported quarterly to the YJMB to inform continuous improvement. Operationally, the service benefits from the embedded support of an Educational Psychologist for two days per week. This role is pivotal in supporting EHCP assessments, collaborating with schools, providing case consultation and formulation, and enhancing the delivery of Enhanced Case Management interventions.

Mental health care and emotional wellbeing (EH&WB)
The breakdown of education type for young people ending their Intervention in Q4 (Jan-Mar 2026) is set out and explained in the chart below:



Analysis of the above data shows that of the 64 young people, 12 are Children Looked After (19%). Of the 12 Children Looked After 8 have been identified as either requiring SEN support or have an Education Health Care Plan.

- Of 64 children 54 are White British (84%), 10 Minority Ethnic (15.6%).
- Of the above children 9 (14%) are female.
- Of the 64 children 36 (56%) have been identified as SEN – the breakdown of SEN level is shown below:

SEN Level	Number
Education, Health and Care Plan	23
In school SEN support	13
Total	**36**

Source: Childview

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) has established clear pathways and processes to ensure that all children and young people are screened for support at the earliest opportunity. Within the 'Harm Outside the Home' framework, three specialist nurses screen for mental and emotional health needs, deliver targeted interventions, and facilitate timely signposting to appropriate services.

The YJS also provides access to an emotional and mental health drop-in service as part of wider youth provision. This offers counselling support for children aged 11–19, and up to age 25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), addressing a range of needs including bereavement, mental health, and issues related to substance misuse.

In 2024, the Branch model was introduced across Wirral. This digital portal enables children and young people to be referred into the most appropriate emotional health and wellbeing support based on their individual needs. A dedicated 'backbone' team offers additional support where further information is required to ensure accurate matching to services.

Children engaged with Wirral YJS can access counselling support daily through the drop-in provision based at Pilgrim Street, ensuring accessible and responsive emotional health support.

Equality and Diversity

In January 2026, Wirral's Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) reviewed its Equality Objectives and Terms of Reference, reaffirming its commitment to oversight by assigning a named Board member with lead responsibility. In April 2026, the service's Diversity, Neurodiversity and Disproportionality Policy was subject to its annual review. This included a detailed action plan, which is RAG-rated and monitored biannually, with full endorsement from the YJMB. (Appendix 15: YJS Diversity, Neurodiversity and Disproportionality action plan)

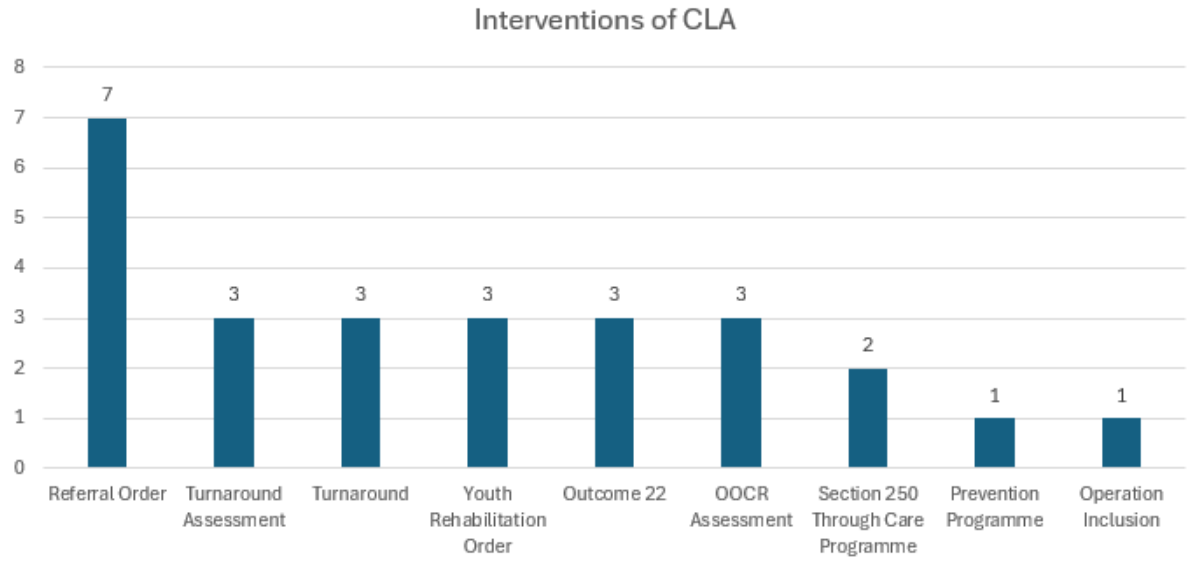
Performance oversight is supported by the Business Manager through a comprehensive dashboard, which highlights areas of concern in relation to the over-representation of children. This includes analysis by ethnicity, looked-after status, school exclusions, and a range of protected characteristics such as disability, mental health needs, special educational needs (SEN), and speech, language and communication needs.

The YJB Summary Ethnicity 2025-26 for Wirral stated 90% of children involved with the YJS were from a White background with 10% being from an Ethnic Minority Groups.

The YJB Ethnic Disparity toolkit headlines the following data for **Wirral**:

- 31964 local population aged 10-17 years (2024 census)
- 53 White children were cautioned or sentenced. Compared to the local population of White children (28,768) this represents 0.18% of the local population
- 5 Minority Ethnic children were cautioned or sentenced. Compared to the local population of Minority Ethnic children (3196) this represents 0.15%
- 0 Minority Ethnic children received a Custodial Sentence out of 3 Custodial Sentences in the year 2025-26

The breakdown of the YJS Wirral CLA cases by Legal Status week commencing 25th May is listed below:



Source: Childview

21 of the above CLA Children are White British (81%) with five children identifying as Minority Ethnic (19%). NB: Six of these children are out of area Children Looked After.

The snapshot of Child Protection cases week commencing the 26th May 2026 is listed below:

Child	Age	Gender/Sex	Ethnicity	Intervention Type
A	16	Female	White and Black African	Outcome 22
B	16	Male	White – British	Section 250 Through Care Programme
C	16	Male	White – English	Referral Order
D	14	Male	White – British	Referral Order
E	13	Male	White – British	Operation Inclusion
F	14	Male	Any Other Mixed Background	Referral Order
G	17	Male	White – British	Section 250 Through Care Programme
H	15	Male	White – British	Youth Rehabilitation Order ISS
I	15	Male	White – British	Section 250 Through Care Programme

J	13	Male	White – British	Operation Inclusion
K	14	Male	White – British	OOCR Assessment
L	16	Male	White – British	Referral Order

The snapshot of CIN cases w/c 26/05/2026 is as below:

Child	Age	Gender/Sex	Ethnicity	Intervention Type
A	16	Male	White - British	Section 250 Licence Programme
B	17	Male	White - British	Youth Rehabilitation Order
C	15	Male	White - British	Operation Inclusion
D	17	Male	White - British	Outcome 22
E	14	Male	White - British	Asses Assessment
F	17	Male	White - British	Youth Rehabilitation Order
G	17	Female	White - British	Referral Order
H	11	Male	White - British	Prevention Programme
I	14	Male	White - British	Referral Order

Source: Childview

Prevention and Diversion

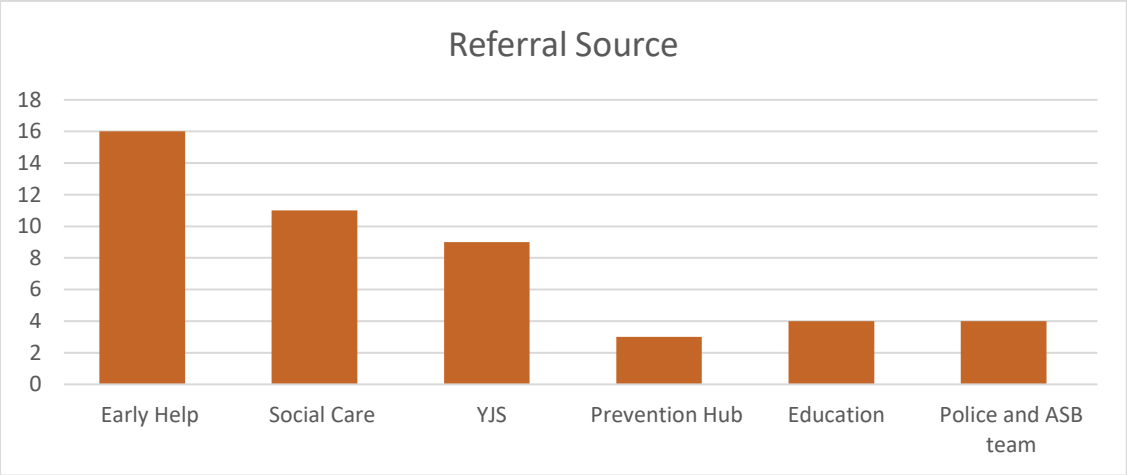
Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) prioritises early identification and targeted support to improve outcomes for children and young people. This is underpinned by a range of funding streams that support prevention and diversionary activity. A key element of this approach is the development of robust exit strategies, ensuring that young people and their families are effectively connected to wider community support networks upon completion of their intervention with YJS.

To further empower families and young people, Wirral has developed accessible digital resources. The Wirral Family Toolbox website (www.wirralfamilytoolbox.co.uk) provides a comprehensive platform offering information, guidance, and contact details for a wide range of support services available to parents and carers.

In addition, the Zillo website (www.zillowirral.co.uk) offers a dedicated resource for young people, helping them to access information, advice, and support. Wirral YJS contributes to this platform, providing guidance on key areas such as navigating the court process, understanding stop and search powers, and accessing support for substance misuse (www.zillowirral.co.uk/youth-justice).

Through funding secured via the Home Office Turnaround Grant and Public Health, Wirral YJS has further strengthened its prevention offer. This includes the delivery of an activity-based programme, alongside tailored one-to-one support for eligible children and young people in line with Home Office Turnaround criteria. Over the past four years, the service has exceeded its target for engagement, with staff and managers ensuring that the right individuals receive timely support aimed at reducing offending and preventing escalation within the community.

Turnaround Referral Source 2025/26

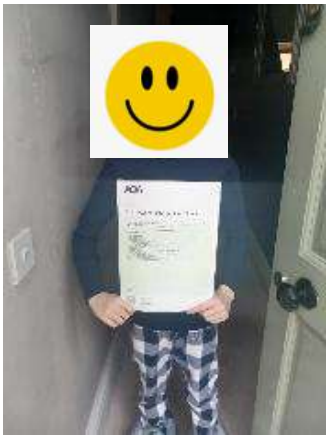


The development of the Turnaround programme continues to strengthen Wirral's prevention offer, particularly in response to evolving national criteria and the increasing complexity of need presented by children at risk of entering the youth justice system. In Year 4, changes introduced by the Ministry of Justice enabled the programme to extend its reach to include children subject to Child Protection plans and those who are Looked After by the Local Authority. This was a key development, reflecting feedback from Youth Justice Services that prevention resources should be targeted towards those children experiencing the highest levels of vulnerability and risk, ensuring that early intervention is both equitable and impactful.

During 2025/26, 31 children were supported through the Turnaround programme, with 21 of these children also open to social care. This reflects a well-established pattern seen within Youth Justice Board data over time, where children who become involved in the youth justice system, particularly in later adolescence, often present with multiple and overlapping needs. These include experiences of care, safeguarding concerns, trauma, and unmet welfare needs, reinforcing the importance of early, holistic intervention.

Referrals into Turnaround have centred on children displaying behaviours that indicate an increased risk of progression into the youth justice system. This includes anti-social behaviour both within school and the community, as well as behaviours linked to violence, conflict within the home, or an emerging interest in weapons. Wirral YJS adopts a trauma-informed and child-first approach to understanding these behaviours, recognising that behaviour is a form of communication. As such, interventions are designed not simply to address the presenting behaviour, but to explore and respond to the underlying experiences and unmet needs that are driving it.

A consistent theme identified across the four years of the programme is the prevalence of low confidence and self-esteem among participating children. Many of the young people supported have struggled to maintain engagement within mainstream education, often feeling disconnected from their peers and lacking a sense of achievement. For some, this is compounded by experiences of trauma, neglect, or instability, alongside limited opportunities to receive validation and positive reinforcement. The Turnaround programme is therefore focused not only on reducing risk, but on building strengths, confidence, and a sense of belonging.



To support this, Wirral YJS has introduced the AQA Unit Award Scheme as part of its prevention offer. This development provides children with tangible recognition of their progress, achievements, and personal development, helping to reinforce positive identity and motivation. Early implementation has seen the first cohort of young people achieve accredited awards, with plans in place to expand this further, embedding it as a core element of the prevention pathway.

Targeted community engagement has also been a key feature of delivery, particularly in identified Evolve Wirral priority areas such as Woodchurch. While initial engagement in this locality required sustained relationship-building, Year 4 has seen a marked shift, with increased participation driven by peer influence and positive word-of-mouth within the community. Young people who had previously engaged in targeted activities, such as the Energise Cycles project, played a key role in encouraging others to participate, resulting in a ‘snowball effect’ of engagement from both young people and parents. Delivering interventions in group settings has proven particularly effective, enabling practitioners to address shared experiences, build trust, and reduce fears linked to territorial conflict. Activities such as e-bike sessions have provided valuable opportunities to engage young people in discussions around safety, responsibility, and the legal implications of risk-related behaviours.

Building on this progress, the service is developing stronger pathways into community-based opportunities, including the ‘You Matter’ project, with the aim of supporting young people to transition into education, training, and employment within their own neighbourhoods. This reflects a broader commitment to sustaining positive outcomes beyond the lifespan of the Turnaround intervention.

A further area of development within the programme has been the introduction of peer mentoring, in partnership with the Youth Service. Two trained peer mentors have supported delivery this year, bringing valuable lived experience into group-based sessions. Their involvement has enabled young people to connect with relatable role models who demonstrate the potential for change and growth. This has had a positive impact on engagement, whilst also supporting the ongoing development of the peer mentors themselves as they build skills and experience alongside Youth Justice practitioners.

The Turnaround programme continues to demonstrate the value of a trauma-informed, relationship-based, and community-focused model of prevention. It supports children and families at a critical point of need, addressing underlying vulnerabilities while building strengths, resilience, and opportunities for positive progression. This approach is central to Wirral YJS's wider ambition to prevent first-time entry into the youth justice system and ensure that children are supported to achieve better outcomes.

Operation Inclusion/No Comment Pathway

As outlined earlier in this plan, initiatives such as Operation Inclusion and the No Comment Pathway demonstrate Wirral's commitment to piloting and developing effective prevention practice, working in partnership with the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. These approaches are informing wider development across Merseyside Youth Justice Services.

During 2026/27, Wirral YJS will continue to strengthen and evolve its prevention pathways in collaboration with the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. A key priority for the year is the development and implementation of a Custody Navigator scheme within the Wirral Police Custody Suite. This role will provide a significant opportunity to engage children and young people at a critical point, offering timely intervention when they may be most vulnerable.

Custody Navigators will work directly with in police custody, building positive and trusting relationships with children and young people. They will provide reassurance, advocacy and practical support, helping individuals to understand and navigate the custody process in a trauma-informed and child-centred way. Recognising that custody can be a highly stressful and potentially traumatic experience, this role will ensure that young people feel safe, supported and listened to.

Following release, Custody Navigators will continue to provide support within the community, offering continuity through follow-up contact, goal setting and practical assistance. This sustained intervention aims to support positive outcomes and reduce the likelihood of further involvement in the criminal justice system.

A further prevention priority for 2026/27 is the introduction of Young Futures Panels. These multi-agency partnership forums bring together police, youth justice, education, health and children's services to identify children and young people who may be vulnerable to being drawn into crime. Through shared assessment and information, the panels will develop coordinated support plans tailored to individual need.

The purpose of the Young Futures Panels is to strengthen early identification and intervention, particularly for those who may not meet existing thresholds or who are at risk of being overlooked by services. By ensuring timely referral into appropriate support and tracking outcomes, this approach aims to prevent serious violence, anti-social behaviour and other forms of harm, while improving partnership working and outcomes for children and families.

Out of Court Resolutions

Data on prevention and diversionary interventions are recorded on the YJS case management system. All Out of Court Resolutions are recorded initially as an Assess Assessment Intervention, following a referral from the Police Service. Once the young person has been assessed and attended the Out of Court Resolution Panel a decision is made whether the case is opened as a Community Resolution, Outcome 22 or Operation Inclusion intervention (knife crime - Outcome 23).

From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 there were 22 Community Resolutions and 168 Outcome 22's delivered by the YJS. 23 young people also received Operation Inclusion interventions.

Out of Court Resolutions have a very low re-referral rate. The cohort for January to March 2025 consists of 57 young people, tracked forward 12 months, this shows that 3 young people have gone on to offend, and 1 child was re-referred to the OOCR process. This equates to a re-offending rate of 5%. This data is taken from cases recorded in Childview.

In the Zone Programme

The *In the Zone* programme continues to be a well-established, multi-agency prevention initiative delivered across secondary schools in Wirral. It provides structured, interactive sessions for Year 9 students, bringing together partners to deliver key messages on topics such as crime and consequences, substance misuse, peer pressure, child exploitation and fire safety.

The service delivers the programme in small group settings, typically involving around 20 young people per session, enabling a more engaging and participative learning experience. This approach has been shown to support greater interaction, allowing young people to ask questions, share views and engage more openly with professionals compared to larger assemblies or classroom-based presentations.

Over the past year, *In the Zone* has been delivered across 15 mainstream secondary schools and 3 specialist provisions, reaching approximately 4,000 young people aged 13–14. The programme continues to demonstrate strong impact, with 87% of young people reporting increased knowledge following the sessions, and the majority indicating that the content and delivery met their needs.

Feedback from schools and partners remains highly positive, with all participating schools requesting continued delivery in the next academic year. The programme has also strengthened relationships between young people and practitioners, particularly in supporting visibility and engagement with youth services and partner agencies within local communities.

The Youth Justice Service Thematic Lead continues to work closely with Wirral Police Officers and multi-agency partners to identify young people who may benefit from

additional prevention support. This includes linking insights from delivery into targeted interventions, joint activity programmes and, where appropriate, one-to-one support. Looking ahead, *In the Zone* will expand further across Wirral, including increased delivery within specialist and alternative provision settings. Content will continue to be reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant to emerging risks, with additional staffing capacity supporting the ongoing development and sustainability of the programme.

Serious violence and exploitation

Violence continues to represent the predominant offence category within youth justice statutory caseloads locally and nationally. Reducing serious violence remains a core priority for Wirral, reflected within the Safer Wirral Strategy and overseen through the Safer Wirral Partnership Board. This aligns with the statutory Serious Violence Duty, introduced under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, which places a legal responsibility on local authorities, police, health, fire and rescue, and other partners to collaborate, share data, and take a preventative, public health approach to tackling serious violence.

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) works in close partnership with the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), which continues to lead the regional response to serious violence through a public health framework. Building on the Government's 2018 Serious Violence Strategy, the VRP brings together Merseyside Police, Fire and Rescue Service, local authorities, Youth Justice Services, Probation, health partners, education providers, and community organisations to coordinate prevention, early intervention, and enforcement activity. This partnership approach supports a shared understanding of risk, vulnerability, and harm, and enables targeted and evidence-based responses.

National public health evidence, now led by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (formerly Public Health England), reinforces that serious violence is strongly associated with a range of intersecting factors, including domestic abuse, substance misuse (particularly alcohol), trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and socio-economic disadvantage. Locally, Merseyside's strategic response reflects these findings, with clearly defined priorities, delivery themes, and outcome measures (as referenced in Appendix 13), ensuring alignment with both national policy and local need.

A coordinated, multi-agency and multi-strand approach is essential in addressing the complexity of serious youth violence. Emerging and persistent trends continue to highlight the links between serious youth violence and issues such as county lines drug trafficking, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, negative peer group influence, school exclusion, and substance misuse. These drivers often intersect, increasing vulnerability and risk for children and young people.

In response, Wirral YJS prioritises prevention and early intervention, underpinned by Child First and trauma-informed principles. This includes:

- Building resilience through strengths-based practice
- Providing positive diversionary and developmental opportunities
- Intervening at key "teachable moments" (for example, post-arrest, post-release, or following significant incidents)
- Disrupting pathways into exploitation and serious violence at the earliest opportunity

The service is structurally aligned within the Harm Outside the Home (Contextual Safeguarding) Service, enabling a coherent and integrated response to risks beyond the family environment. This includes close working with specialist exploitation and missing services to ensure that contextual risks, such as peer, school, and community influences are effectively identified and addressed.

Strategic and operational leadership is strengthened through governance arrangements, with the Head of Service chairing both the Safeguarding Partnership's Harm Outside the Home Committee and the local Channel Panel (Prevent). This ensures clear oversight, alignment, and escalation pathways across safeguarding, exploitation, and serious violence agendas.

Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership's Safer Adolescence Strategy further underpins this work, setting out a coordinated framework for protecting adolescents at risk of harm outside the home. Multi-agency forums, including the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Panel and associated disruption meetings, play a critical role in identifying, tracking, and responding to children at risk of exploitation and serious violence. YJS is an active and consistent contributor to these panels, ensuring that justice-involved children are appropriately represented within safeguarding processes.

Operationally, Compass, Wirral's specialist exploitation team, provides a key intelligence and safeguarding function. Through the daily monitoring of overnight arrests, stop and search activity, police intelligence, and missing episodes, Compass identifies early indicators of exploitation and offending risk. This intelligence is shared within daily multi-agency briefings, enabling timely identification of children requiring support and facilitating immediate engagement with YJS and partner services.

Wirral's approach reflects a mature, partnership-driven model that integrates statutory duties, public health principles, and Child First practice. The focus remains on preventing harm, reducing reoffending, and addressing the underlying causes of serious violence through coordinated, evidence-based interventions.

In terms of general violence and the YJS cohort. During April 2025 to March 2026 there were 34 individual children sentenced for a total of 57 violent offences. The breakdown of violent offences is listed below: NB: one girl was responsible for 11 Assaults on Emergency worker.

April 2025 – March 2026		
Offence	**Number**	**% Of total offences**
Assault a person thereby occasioning them actual bodily harm	9	**15%**
Assault by beating	15	**25%**
Assault by beating of an emergency worker	16	**27%**
Possess an offensive weapon in a public place	1	**2%**
Possess knife blade / sharp pointed article in a public place	14	**23%**
Violent Disorder	1	**2%**
Section 18 - wounding with/without intent	2	**3%**

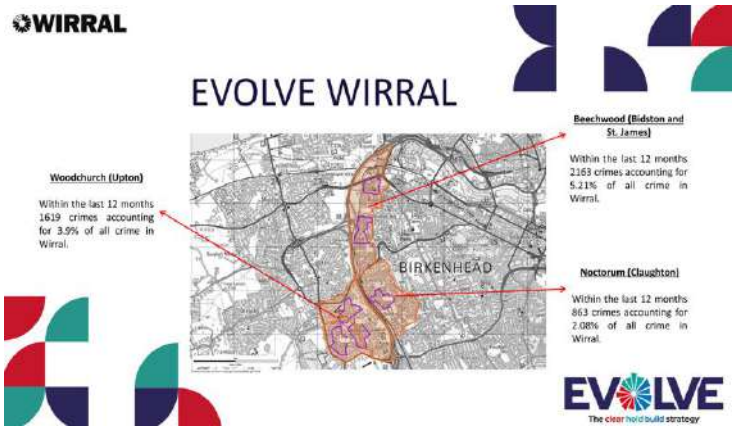
Threaten a person with an offensive weapon in a public place	2	**3%**

There are several initiatives across the wider partnership focused on youth violence. Multi-agency Safe space operations regularly take place in open spaces, as well as targeted high visibility patrolling in the violence hotspots to disrupt serious violence.

As laid out in the Strategic Plans of 2024-26, Prevention and Diversion, especially linked to serious violence and exploitation will continue to be key themes.

Gangs/Organised Crime

EVOLVE projects are currently being delivered across areas of Wirral as part of a multi-agency partnership approach known as *Clear, Hold, Build*. This initiative, designed and part-funded by the Home Office, aims to reclaim and regenerate communities most affected by serious and organised crime. The programme brings together high-visibility targeted policing and covert enforcement activity, alongside coordinated partner interventions and resident engagement, to protect communities and disrupt organised crime groups.



Working closely alongside this, the Youth Justice Service collaborates with staff from Operation Stonehaven. This service focuses on providing opportunities and meaningful activities to divert young people away from criminal pathways. Through targeted preventative programmes across Wirral, Operation Stonehaven supports children and young people who are on the cusp of offending and at risk of exploitation.

The 'In the Zone' theme already delivers prevention messaging aimed at addressing these harms. However, local safeguarding, youth justice and community safety partners will continue to review and strengthen the local offer in response to emerging trends. In 2025, the Turnaround Programme has successfully supported and diverted a significant cohort of Wirral children, particularly on the Woodchurch estate, helping to prevent their involvement in organised crime.

Child knife possession offences

Merseyside YJS's fully acknowledge the government's Knife Crime Possession guidance February 2026, and the National Police Chief Council Child Knife Possession Disposal guidance published in April 2026.

Each YJS delivers an established 'Out of Court Resolution' (OOCR) system to engage children through a range of interventions where it is not appropriate to charge with a criminal offence. As part of this, each service operates a multi-agency decision-making panel where partners share information to collectively determine the best outcome for the child.

To comply with the guidance, Merseyside YJS's have established Youth Conditional Caution and Deferred Prosecution processes in place which are the recommended OOCR options for knife crime offences.

Safeguarding remains a priority and children who commit offences will be afforded the same safeguarding considerations and any other child.

Merseyside Youth Justice Services have worked together to determine a consistent approach in how knife crime offences for children will be managed. Responses align with the guidance and will therefore be swift, robust, evidence-based and thorough.
YJS's will comply with the guidance steps as follows:

Step 1 Police Alerts to YJS: there are already systems in place for the Police to inform YJS's within one day of all knife possession offences to ensure a swift response. Pathways are established to enable consultation to take place as part of the charging decision-making process.

Step 2 Initial Judgment and YJS Referrals: For children suitable for an Out of Court Resolution, Merseyside YJS's already utilise the Prevention and Diversion assessment to understand the child, their circumstances and identify underlying factors that have contributed to the child's behaviour. In each borough, there are multi-agency Out of Court decision-making panels where partners collectively determine the most appropriate option for the child.

Step 3 Appropriate Outcomes: For knife crime offences being managed out of court, children will be able to access a Youth Conditional Caution or a Deferred Prosecution only with a mandatory plan.

All YJS's have the resources to deliver support and interventions within 4 weeks of the resolution decision. Whilst a Youth Conditional Caution is the expected outcome decision, all YJS's have established the Deferred Prosecution scheme as part of their suite of options where it in not proportionate to criminalise a child and they would benefit from structured support.

Community Resolutions will not be utilised as an appropriate option, and it is acknowledged that in rare cases a direct referral to CAMHS may be the most appropriate intervention (where there is no assessed risk to the public).

Whilst an admission is required for a YCC, a Deferred Prosecution can be offered without an admission, however this will not be utilised where a defence has been raised. Children will not be offered more than one Deferred Prosecution and is reserved for children under 16 only. This is in line with NPCC guidance.

Merseyside YJS's have agreed with the Police in how knife crimes through the out of court process will be recorded.

Step 4 Appropriate Interventions: All YJS's will deliver a structured plan of evidence-based interventions which build on the child's strengths, address the causes of the behaviours and meets the needs and wishes of the harmed person. YJS's will consider the YEF tool in determining relevant intervention for children.

Step 5 Scrutiny: Merseyside Youth Justice Services (YJS) operate out of court decision-making panels comprised of key partners, ensuring that decisions for children are appropriate, proportionate, and informed by a multi-agency perspective. Cases are supported by a clear YJS assessment tool, which is quality assured prior to panel consideration, strengthening the consistency and robustness of decision-making. A well-established escalation process is in place to support oversight and ensure any concerns are addressed promptly.

Each YJS is accountable to a Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB), which receives regular reports on the delivery of core statutory duties. This includes data and information relating to knife crime, the use of out of court resolutions, court orders, and broader performance indicators. This governance structure ensures that learning is shared, performance is scrutinised, and that any areas for improvement are identified and escalated across the partnership.

Within Wirral, the management team undertakes quarterly thematic audits, which incorporate knife-related offences and incidents where relevant. These audits focus on key areas including harm to others, harm to self, reoffending and re-referrals, and out of court resolutions (OOCR). Findings are routinely reported to the YJMB to support transparency, learning, and continuous improvement.

To further strengthen compliance with national guidance, additional scrutiny is provided through the Merseyside Youth Improvement Group. This forum enables the wider partnership to offer both assurance and constructive challenge regarding the quality and effectiveness of decision-making and practice, particularly in cases of concern.

Further scrutiny is also provided through the quarterly Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) scrutiny panel, attended by statutory partner agencies. This ensures robust oversight, shared learning, and continuous improvement in decision-making when a knife offence is chosen.

In parallel, work is underway to explore the development of a dedicated Merseyside knife crime audit panel. This potential panel will undertake focused case reviews, support deeper analysis of practice and identify opportunities for learning and service improvement in relation to knife crime offences.

Constructive resettlement and the use of custody (including remands)
During April 2025 to March 2026 there were 4 young people who were remanded in custody prior to sentencing. The chart below shows their age, gender, ethnicity, and offence type.

Child	Age at beginning of RIC	Gender	Ethnicity	Offence
A	16years 11 months	Male	White British	Violence
B	15 years 1 months	Male	White British	Violence

C	17 years 10 months	Male	Minority Ethnic	Conspire to commit Robbery
D	15 years 0 months	Male	White British	Violence

During April 2025 to March 2026 two young people were sentenced to custody. The chart below shows their age, gender, ethnicity, and court outcomes. Boy A was sentenced to two Custodial Sentences.

Child	Age at sentence	Gender	Ethnicity	Custodial outcome
A	15 years 5 months	Male	White British	DTO
A	15 years 11 months	Male	White British	DTO
B	18 years 1 months	Male	White British	Section 250

Wirral's Resettlement Policy was reviewed in 2025 and endorsed by the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB). Aligned with the national protocol, the policy is subject to ongoing monitoring and review. Custody use remains very low in Wirral. The safety, wellbeing, and resettlement of children in custody are closely monitored through in-house Multi-Agency High Risk Meetings and resettlement meetings, which include detailed resettlement and release plans. These processes identify and escalate any gaps in provision as needed.

Transition and accommodation.
Like many areas nationwide, Wirral is continuing to strengthen its approach to securing suitable accommodation for a small group of young people approaching 18 and transitioning to Probation. Partners continue to work collaboratively to enhance resettlement and transition support. These focused efforts aim to improve stability, promote positive outcomes, and further reduce the risk of reoffending.

Accommodation is now a Key Performance Indicator, with progress monitored and reported at Youth Justice Management Board meetings. The board benefits from the involvement of the senior housing manager, a strong advocate for securing timely and appropriate accommodation.

The transition from Youth Justice Services into Probation is a well-established and embedded component of Wirral's multi-agency framework, underpinned by a formalised **"**bridging arrangement" that is set out within the partnership agreement and fully integrated into the Youth Justice Service strategic plan. This approach reflects national expectations as outlined by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), which emphasise the importance of effective transition planning for children approaching adulthood.

The bridging process is designed to ensure continuity of supervision, mitigate risk, and sustain engagement at a critical point in a young person's journey. It enables a period of coordinated, joint working between YJS practitioners and Probation staff prior to transfer, including shared assessments, sentence planning, and relationship-building with the receiving Probation officer. This staged transition supports a gradual shift rather than a

cliff-edge change, which is recognised as best practice within youth justice and probation guidance.

Operationally, the approach is now well embedded and consistently applied across the partnership. Transition planning begins at the earliest appropriate stage, typically well in advance of a young person's 18th birthday, ensuring that risk, need, and responsivity factors are fully understood and communicated. The model is underpinned by strong information sharing, joint reviews, and the alignment of intervention plans, with a clear focus on maintaining compliance and reducing the likelihood of disengagement.

This sustained and coordinated approach has yielded measurable improvements in outcomes. Over the past two years, there has been a notable reduction in the number of young adults breaching their statutory orders following transition to Probation. While causality cannot be attributed to a single factor, the consistency of the bridging process, improved joint ownership of cases, and strengthened professional relationships between services have collectively contributed to enhanced levels of compliance and engagement post-transfer.

Importantly, the approach also reflects Wirral's commitment to Child First and trauma-informed principles, recognising that young adults transitioning into the adult criminal justice system often present with complex needs, including neurodevelopmental vulnerabilities, trauma, and entrenched disadvantage. By maintaining a relational and supportive approach during transition, the service is better able to promote desistance, support stability, and reduce the risk of escalation into more serious offending.

The ongoing focus is to further strengthen this pathway through continuous quality assurance, alignment with national transition standards, and ensuring that the voice and experience of children and young adults inform future development.

Detention in Police Custody

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) plays a key role in the Merseyside Scrutiny of Children in Police Custody Panel, a well-established multi-agency forum providing oversight of young people detained overnight or for extended periods (15+ hours). The panel brings together partners from policing, youth justice, social care and safeguarding to review the necessity and appropriateness of detention, ensure compliance with PACE, and use detailed case review ("deep dives") to identify system learning and drive improvement across the partnership.

Scrutiny activity has highlighted a number of systemic pressures, including increasing rates of youth arrest alongside a decline in the use of voluntary attendance, and a persistent proportion of young people spending extended periods in custody. These delays are often linked to procedural requirements and organisational factors, including access to appropriate adults, legal representatives and overnight resources. In addition, significant challenges remain in securing suitable local authority accommodation, resulting in some children remaining in police custody longer than necessary.

In response, Wirral YJS has strengthened local partnership arrangements to reduce the use and impact of custody. This includes implementing improved notification pathways between police custody and children's social care to enhance safeguarding oversight, expanding and professionalising Appropriate Adult provision through multi-agency training, and working with children's services to identify experienced foster carers who can provide emergency placements directly from custody.

This combined approach supports timely release from custody, reduces reliance on emergency duty arrangements, and promotes placement in more appropriate, trauma-informed environments. It also aligns with regional priorities to reduce unnecessary detention, increase the use of diversionary approaches, and ensure children are only held in custody as a last resort and for the shortest possible period.

The scrutiny panel continues to operate as an effective “critical friend” across Merseyside, strengthening accountability, improving multi-agency practice, and driving system change. Its model and impact have been recognised nationally, with the Youth Justice Board highlighting the panel as effective practice in promoting shared learning and improving outcomes for children in custody.

Remands and Use of Custody

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS), alongside other local services, reports into the Merseyside Criminal Justice Board (MCJB), chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner and supported by the North-West Regional Representative for the Youth Justice Board. The MCJB brings together key stakeholders and decision-makers from across the criminal justice system, providing effective governance to identify and address areas of concern.

Wirral YJS managers and staff actively assess and, where appropriate, challenge the use and duration of remand, prioritising robust and well-managed bail packages where risks can be safely addressed in the community. Where there is a risk of remand to custody, YJS works closely with Children’s Social Care to propose suitable alternative accommodation to support bail applications for court consideration. Restorative Justice (RJ) is embedded throughout practice, with young people being made aware of opportunities pre-sentence, and harmed persons offered voluntary engagement post-sentence in line with the Victim’s Code of Practice. Where appropriate, the YJS Victim Worker liaises with custodial settings to facilitate restorative conferences.

While a young person is in custody, Wirral YJS leads the development of comprehensive multi-agency plans with custodial services and external partners, including health, education and children’s services. This ensures effective information sharing and supports the creation of robust resettlement, contingency and exit plans, alongside regular professional visits to maintain engagement. Risk management is coordinated through Multi-Agency High Risk Safety and Wellbeing Meetings (internal and external), as well as participation in Critical Case Panels and Enhanced Support Team meetings where required. Where accommodation is a concern, YJS works promptly with Children’s Services and partners to put appropriate plans in place ahead of release, including robust licence arrangements where necessary.

The service places strong emphasis on maintaining family and carer relationships during custody as a key element of successful resettlement. For children who are looked after, arrangements for visits and involvement in planning are coordinated with social workers, with families invited to attend meetings and supported to do so where needed. In preparing for release, the YJS carefully considers the impact of custody alongside previous trauma and adverse childhood experiences, ensuring plans are tailored to the individual and that the right professionals are in place to deliver support during the licence

period. On release, all relevant notifications are completed, including informing the Police via established processes, with activity clearly recorded within case records.

Alongside this, Merseyside and Cheshire local authorities have secured Ministry of Justice funding to deliver a regional Remand Reform Programme, aimed at strengthening community-based alternatives to custodial remand and improving outcomes for children. This presents a significant opportunity to redesign how children on remand are supported, reduce reliance on custody, and ensure a more consistent, welfare-led approach across the region. For Wirral YJS, this will be a key priority for 2026–27, focusing on developing safe community alternatives, improving consistency in remand decision-making, and strengthening multi-agency responses across the nine Merseyside and Cheshire authorities, in line with national reform, the Serious Violence Duty and Child First principles.

The programme will be led by Foster4, who will oversee the development phase, including scoping, partnership coordination and early design work, bringing expertise in fostering, placement sufficiency and regional commissioning. During 2026–27, Wirral YJS will contribute to the development of the regional model, support the creation of community-based alternatives such as remand fostering and supported accommodation, and work collaboratively to reduce the use of custodial remand where safe and appropriate. This reflects the service's commitment to improving outcomes for children, reducing trauma, and ensuring custody is used only as a last resort.

Constructive Resettlement

Wirral Youth Justice Service is committed to supporting children to successfully transition from custody back into the community through a constructive resettlement approach. This is underpinned by five core principles.

Firstly, the service adopts a constructive approach in line with national and Pan-Merseyside resettlement policies, ensuring that all plans, interventions, and assessments are meaningful and support positive outcomes for both the child and the wider community.

Secondly, resettlement planning is co-created with young people and their families wherever possible. This ensures that their voices are heard and that plans are realistic, supportive, and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Thirdly, support is carefully tailored to each individual, taking into account their specific needs, risks, and vulnerabilities, while maintaining a clear focus on public safety and effective risk management.

Fourthly, Wirral YJS and its partners provide a consistent and coordinated approach, ensuring that young people experience reliable support and are well-prepared for life after custody.

Finally, the YJS leads a coordinated multi-agency response, chairing resettlement meetings to align partners and maximise the effectiveness of support. This collaborative approach helps ensure that young people are given the best possible opportunity to reintegrate successfully into their communities.

Standards for Children and the Justice System

This area has been addressed throughout the plan, with details action plans on Quality Assurance Audits/Reports and Actions Plans set on findings. (Appendix 10)

Service Development Plans

Wirral YJS is continuing to strengthen its service through an ongoing programme of improvement aligned to its HMIP inspection in 2026. An action plan is already in place, with progress monitored regularly to ensure key findings are addressed, including enhancements to assessment quality, partnership coordination, and consistency of practice. There have been no serious incident reviews or learning reviews in the past 12 months. The service will also align its priorities with the forthcoming Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan 2024–2027, using its national direction to shape local development, strengthen evidence-based practice, and support improved outcomes for children. The full HMIP report is publicly available online and the action plans are available in appendix 14.

Workforce Development

Wirral Youth Justice and the Local Authority value and invest heavily in Workforce Development. Wirral Youth Justice Service has invested in Trauma-Informed Working Practice, and all staff have completed the Trauma Recovery Model Training/ECM Training. Managers have completed supervision under a trauma-informed framework, supporting staff with vicarious trauma and strengthening supervision and support structures.

Staff who have joined the service in the past 12 months undertook Trauma Recovery Training/ECM Training in 2025 and beginning of 2026.

All staff working with children and families in Wirral will participate in the Systemic Practice training course, commissioned by the Safeguarding Partnership. This training enhances the Trauma Journey and Action Plan within Wirral Youth Justice Service, strengthening the support provided to families.

Staff engage in monthly workforce development sessions designed to expand their knowledge and encourage ownership of their professional growth. These sessions, led by staff in collaboration with managers, feature regular guest speakers, training, and briefings, including contributions from external agencies on topics identified through quality assurance audits or staff discussions about areas for practice improvement.

In the field of Harmful Sexual Behaviour, staff receive quarterly Clinical Supervision through the AIM Project, the UK's leading experts in this area. Feedback highlights that this support boosts staff confidence in navigating this complex and challenging specialty. During monthly supervision, staff and managers discuss additional training needs to enhance practice. Each staff member has an individual training plan tailored to their development.

Over the past year, Wirral Youth Justice Service staff have completed a comprehensive and diverse programme of professional development through the Cross Training Group (CTG), alongside mandatory Local Authority training (see Appendix 11 for full details). This has included accredited leadership and management development, with staff

undertaking ILM Level 3 and Level 5 qualifications and participation in the Systemic Practice 5-day Leaders Programme. Three staff have also completed or commenced the Youth Justice Professional Certificate in Effective Practice (YJPCEP).

Training has focused strongly on enhancing practitioners' skills in working with complex needs and risks, including trauma-informed practice, safeguarding, MAPPA, bail and remand, and youth justice law. Staff have developed their capability in key thematic areas such as neurodiversity (including ASD, speech and language, and links to extremism), mental health, online safety, and emerging harms such as gaming and gambling, image offences, and violence against women and girls.

A significant emphasis has been placed on relational and practice-based approaches, including restorative justice, non-violent resistance, de-escalation and safe handling (SHADES), and trauma-informed and transitional safeguarding practice. Staff have also engaged in specialist training to strengthen responses to exploitation, sexual abuse (including intra-familial abuse pathways), harmful sexual behaviour, knife crime, and child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse (CAPVA).

In addition, the workforce has continued to build its competence in equality, diversity, and inclusion through training on unconscious bias, anti-racism, cultural competency, and progressive masculinity, alongside developing skills in communication, identity development, and working effectively with children facing complex adversity. This broad training offer ensures that staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to deliver high-quality, Child First youth justice practice.

Evaluation, Evidence-based practice, and innovation

Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) has made sustained and deliberate progress in embedding Enhanced Case Management (ECM) and Systemic Practice across all levels of service delivery. This approach is not confined to operational activity alone but is fully integrated within the wider Harm Outside the Home framework across Wirral Council, ensuring a coherent and partnership-led response to children's needs. Central to this model is the consistent application of the Trauma Recovery Model, which underpins all case management activity. This enables practitioners to understand behaviour through a trauma-informed lens and to design interventions that promote resilience, recovery, and meaningful, long-term positive outcomes for children and young people across the Wirral footprint.

The service continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to reflective practice and continuous improvement. The development of Trauma-Informed Practice is clearly mapped within Appendix 9, providing a structured overview of the service's journey and maturity in this area. This is further strengthened by a robust programme of self-evaluation, with audit/report findings and targeted action plans outlined in Appendix 10. These mechanisms ensure that practice is not only evidence-informed but is regularly reviewed, challenged, and improved to meet the evolving needs of children and communities.

Restorative Practice remains a core pillar of Wirral YJS, with significant investment made to embed this approach consistently across all service provisions. This commitment reflects a clear organisational ethos centred on repairing harm, strengthening relationships, and promoting accountability in a constructive and child-first manner. The implementation and impact of this approach have been detailed within previous annual

plans (2023–2025), evidencing a sustained and embedded culture of restorative justice across the Wirral system.

In addition, the service continues to deliver innovative and impactful interventions that are achieving recognised outcomes both locally and regionally. Operation Inclusion and the 'No Comment' Pathway represent particularly strong examples of evidence-based practice. Both initiatives have been independently evaluated and accredited by Liverpool John Moores University, providing external validation of their effectiveness. The 'No Comment' Pathway, in particular, reflects the principles of the Lammy Review (2017), demonstrating how children can be supported differently within the justice process while still achieving positive outcomes for both children and those harmed.

The 'In the Zone' education programme has also been subject to evaluation by Liverpool John Moores University, further reinforcing the service's commitment to innovation, prevention, and education-focused interventions. Alongside this, the Peer Mentoring programme has shown significant impact through evaluation reports in 2025 and 2026, evidencing improved outcomes for children as well as supporting the development of future professionals within the youth justice workforce. This success has directly contributed to securing funding for two apprentice roles over the next two years, strengthening workforce sustainability and capacity.

The 'Sliding Doors' programme has gained recognition from the Violence Reduction Partnership for its powerful and impactful work within the Wirral community. Through capturing and sharing real-life stories of change, the programme highlights opportunities for children to make positive life choices and reinforces the service's commitment to early intervention, prevention, and the amplification of lived experience. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate Wirral YJS's continued focus on innovation, evidence-based practice, and achieving meaningful, measurable outcomes for children, families, and communities.

This Year's Priorities

We had set five areas for development in the Annual Plan, two of which were on the previous year's Annual Plan, but we felt as a Service they can be further developed to improve outcomes for our children and young people.

HMIP inspection 2025

Following the HMIP inspection in April 2025, Wirral Youth Justice Service was rated Good overall, with Outstanding planning and good delivery. Inspectors recognised strong child-centred practice, high-quality assessments, and effective engagement with children and families. Planning was identified as a major strength, supported by strong multi-agency partnerships and innovative approaches such as community hubs, mentoring, and the adolescent harm-outside-the-home framework. Continued investment in prevention and diversion has helped reduce first-time entrants and strengthened responses to exploitation and youth violence.

The service also performs well within the YJB framework, using local intelligence and data effectively and maintaining a clear focus on disproportionality, SEND, trauma-informed practice, and inclusion. However, the inspection identified six areas for improvement, particularly around the consistency and depth of assessment and the quality of victim work.

Over the past 12 months, Wirral YJS has delivered significant improvements. Assessment and risk management have been strengthened through new safety planning tools, enhanced guidance, improved quality assurance, and a comprehensive workforce development programme. Victim practice has improved through the implementation of Childview/CACI, strengthened oversight, a Merseyside-wide policy review, better data pathways, and enhanced partnership working, supported by the introduction of a victim champion role. Governance and performance systems have also been strengthened, including improved reporting, thematic reviews, and better data sharing with Merseyside Police. Work to fully embed the required developments continue as part of a longer-term development cycle.

Harmed People/Person and Restorative Practice

Over the past four years, Wirral Youth Justice Service has made strong progress in developing its approach to supporting harmed people and embedding restorative practice across the partnership. Since 2023, the service has expanded victim processes, increased contact, and broadened the restorative offer, supported by specialist roles, workforce development, and partnership-wide restorative practice training. This has resulted in a wider range of interventions, including victim empathy work, letters of apology, shuttle mediation, reparation, and restorative conferences, alongside improved recording, oversight, and data capture through Childview and strengthened links with probation victim liaison services.

Positive progress is evident, with increased activity, better understanding of victim characteristics, and stronger governance following the 2025 HMIP inspection. However, engagement remains variable, and practice is not yet fully consistent across all cases. Some harmed people decline or do not respond to contact, and further work is needed to ensure a fully personalised, trauma-informed, and equitable approach.

For these reasons, this remains a priority for 2026–27, with a continued focus on embedding a consistent, high-quality victim offer. Wirral YJS will work to ensure that all harmed people receive timely and meaningful opportunities to engage in restorative processes, that their needs and characteristics are fully understood, and that interventions are tailored to diversity, neurodiversity, and disproportionality. Continued investment in workforce development, improved data and performance systems, and strengthened governance will support further improvement and better outcomes for victims, children, and communities.

Custody Navigators programme

Wirral Youth Justice Service, The Merseyside Violent Reduction Partnership and Merseyside Police will implement and embed the Trauma-Informed Custody Navigator programme as a key priority for 2026–27. Building on the strong foundations established through the Merseyside pilot and the evidence of need identified through local custody data, the service will introduce skilled Navigators into Birkenhead Custody Suite to provide immediate, trauma-informed support to children aged 10–17 at a critical, teachable moment.

The programme represents a significant step forward in ensuring that children in police custody receive child-centred, emotionally attuned support that addresses their needs, reduces distress, and strengthens engagement with statutory and voluntary services. Early learning from Sefton's pilot and national models such as Cleveland's Navigator Service demonstrates the potential for improved engagement, reduced reoffending, and better outcomes for children and families.

Positive progress has already been made through partnership development, workforce preparation, and the establishment of shared processes across Merseyside. However, full implementation and embedding of the model will require sustained focus throughout 2026–27. This includes ensuring consistent Navigator presence, strengthening multi-agency information sharing, refining screening and referral pathways, and aligning practice with trauma-informed, neurodiversity-aware, and Child First principles.

During 2026–27, Wirral YJS will prioritise delivering a high-quality, evidence-led custody intervention that:

- Provides immediate emotional and practical support to children in custody
- Improves identification of needs including mental health, learning difficulties, safeguarding, and family issues
- Strengthens continuity of care between custody and community services
- Reduces reoffending and repeat admissions through early intervention
- Builds a robust evidence base through LJMU evaluation and monthly data monitoring

Young Futures Prevention Panel (YFPP)
Wirral Youth Justice Service has recently secured new funding to develop and implement the Young Futures Prevention Panel (YFPP) in 2026–27. This marks an important expansion of our early intervention and prevention offer, enabling us to identify and support children at risk of vulnerability, exploitation, and involvement in violence at the earliest possible stage.

The YFPP will bring together partners from policing, children's services, health, education, and the voluntary sector to deliver a co-ordinated, trauma-informed and Child First response. The panel will focus on identifying children at highest risk, co-designing multi-agency interventions, preventing children from falling through service gaps, and embedding restorative and whole-family approaches.

To deliver this new model, Wirral YJS will recruit a Senior Practitioner, Prevention Hub Worker, and Administrative Support Worker, forming the core team responsible for establishing and driving the YFPP. This development phase will be critical to building the infrastructure, pathways, and partnership arrangements required for effective delivery.
This priority aligns with national direction, including the Youth Justice Board's Child First principles and the wider Serious Violence Duty, by ensuring children are seen as children first, their trauma and unmet needs are addressed, and they are diverted away from the justice system wherever possible.

In 2026–27, Wirral YJS will focus on creating, developing, and embedding the YFPP so that children receive timely, personalised support that reduces risk, strengthens protective factors, and improves long-term outcomes.

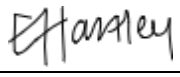
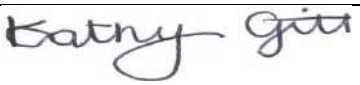
Merseyside & Cheshire Remand Reform Programme
Merseyside and Cheshire local authorities have now secured Ministry of Justice funding to develop a regional remand reform programme, aimed at strengthening community-based alternatives to custodial remand and improving outcomes for children. This funding provides a major opportunity to redesign how the region supports children on remand, reduce reliance on secure accommodation, and ensure a more consistent, welfare-led response.

For Wirral YJS, this will be a key priority in 2026–27. The programme will focus on developing safe community alternatives, improving consistency in remand decision-making, and strengthening multi-agency responses across the nine Merseyside and Cheshire authorities. The work aligns with national remand reform, the Serious Violence Duty, and the Youth Justice Board's Child First principles.

Project management for the regional programme will be led by Foster4, who will oversee the development phase, including scoping, partnership coordination, and early design work. This will ensure the programme benefits from specialist expertise in fostering, placement sufficiency, and regional commissioning.

During 2026–27, Wirral YJS will contribute to the development of the regional model, support the creation of community alternatives such as remand fostering and supported accommodation, and work collaboratively to reduce custodial remand where safe and appropriate. This priority reflects our commitment to improving outcomes for children, reducing trauma, and ensuring that remand is used only as a last resort.

Sign off and approval.

Name	Role	Signature	Date
Elizabeth Hartley	The Executive Director of People, Chair YJMB		9th June 2026
Anthony Kirk	Early Help, Prevention and Effective Practice Assistant Director		9th June 2026
Kathy Gill	Head of Service – Harm Outside the Home Wirral Council		9th June 2026
Mark Evans	Service Manager Wirral Youth Justice Service Wirral Council		9th June 2026

Appendix 1: Staffing Structure Youth Justice Service / Senior Management Structure.

Wirral Youth Justice Service Structure Ch

Wirral Council Senior Leadership Chart

Senior Leadership (SLT) Structure.pdf

Senior Management Struct

Appendix 2: Table B7 Staff by contract type (Number of Full Time Equivalent)

B7: Staff in the Youth Justice Team (by headcount as of 22 May 2026)												
	Strategic Manager		Operational Manager		Practitioner		Administration		Sessional	Student	Volunteer	Total
	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT				
Permanent	0	2	0.6	5	3.8	19	0	3	6	0		39.4
Fixed Term						5		1				6
Outsourced												
Temporary												
Vacant					0.5							0.5
Secondee Children's Services												
Secondee Probation					0.5							0.5
Secondee Police						2						2
Secondee Health (Mental Health)					0.4							0.4
Secondee Health (Physical health)					0.4							0.4
Secondee Health (Other)												0
Education					0.2							0.2
Carers Connect					0.6							0.6
Other												0
TOTAL	0	2	0.6	5	6.4	26	0	4	6	0		**50**

Appendix 3: Table B8 Staff by gender and ethnicity

B8: Staff in the Youth Justice Team by Gender and Ethnicity (as of June 2026)																
	Strategic Manager		Operational Manager		Practitioner		Administration		Sessional		Referral Order Panel Volunteer		Other Volunteer		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Asian																
Black																
Mixed					1					1					1	1
White	1	1	3	3	8	23	0	3	1	4	3	10	1	8	17	52
Any other ethnic group																
Not known								1								
Total	1	1	3	3	9	23	0	4	1	5	3	10	1	8	18	53
Welsh speakers*																

Appendix 4: Partner Contributions to the Youth Justice Partnership Pooled budget 2026/27

Agency	Staffing costs (£)	Payments in kind – revenue (£)	Other delegated funds (£)	Total (£)
Local Authority	1,368,469	0.2 FTE Ed Psych 0.6 FTE Career Connect		1,368,469
Police		2.0 FTE		
Probation		0.5 FTE	5,000	5,000
Public Health		School Nursesx3	28,000	28,000
YJB Youth Justice Grant**	£724,238		£55,407 (remand)	779,645

Other (Public Health)	**15,000 + 50,000**			**65,000**
Total				**£2,246,114**

Appendix 5: Annual victim and prevention report 2025-26

Victim Annual Report 2025 2026.pc

Prevention report Y4.pdf

Appendix 6: Annual Participation Report and Peer Mentoring 2025-26.

P&E report 2025-26.pdf

PEER EDUCATOR REPORT 2025.pdf

Appendix 7: Chief Exec: Working Together – Council Plan 2023-27.

Wirral Working Together 2023-27.pc

Appendix 8: Activity-Based Interventions – children and harmed person/s

Support for YP and Adults Brochure - vi

Youth Justice Brochure.pdf

Support for YP and Adults Brochure.pdf

Appendix 9: Trauma Action Plan reviewed March 2026.

Wirral Trauma informed action pla

Appendix 10: Quality Assurance Audit Action Plan and Reports 2025-26.

Wirral YJS audit Findings 2025-26.dc

Appendix 11: Wirral's Training Plan

CTG Training Plan 2026-7.docx

Wirral Training plan 2026-7 v1.docx

Appendix 12: Wirral YJS Training attended 2025-26

Training attended 2025-26.xlsx

Appendix 13: Violent Reduction Partnership (VRP)

plan-on-a-page-web.pdf

MVRP-Annual-Report-2024-25-final.pdf

Appendix 14: HMIP Improvement Action Plans

HMIP victim action plan .pdf

HMIP action plan - assessment , planni

Appendix 15: YJS Diversity, Neurodiversity and Disproportionality action plan - updated April 2026

YJS Diversity, Neurodiversity and I

Appendix 16: Common Youth Justice terms

ACE	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long-lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
AIM 2 and 3	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
AssetPlus	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
CYPMHS	The Children and Young People's Mental Health Service
CCE	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
Children	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of

	age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
Child First	A system-wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenets to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength-based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
Child looked-after	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
CME	Child Missing Education
Constructive resettlement	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
Contextual safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety
Community resolution	Community resolution, an informal resolution, administered by the police, for low-level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
EHCP	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
ETE	Education, training or employment
EHE	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
EOTAS	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
FTE	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal
HMIP	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
MAPPA	Multi-agency public protection arrangements

MFH	Missing from Home
NRM	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
OOCR	Out-of-court Resolution. All recorded resolutions where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
Outcome 22/21	An informal resolution, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
Over-represented children	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
RHI	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
SLCN	Speech, Language, and communication needs
STC	Secure training centre
SCH	Secure children's home
Young adult	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
YJS	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
YJB	Youth Justice Board, the national body responsible for overseeing and monitoring youth justice services in England and Wales
NCP	No Comment Pathway, a diversionary process allowing children who give a "no comment" interview but meet the evidential threshold to access out-of-court interventions rather than prosecution
MCJB	Merseyside Criminal Justice Board, a multi-agency partnership that oversees and improves the performance of the criminal justice system across Merseyside.
YJMB	Youth Justice Management Board, the multi-agency partnership providing strategic oversight, governance, and

	accountability for the local Youth Justice Service
MACE	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation, a partnership forum that identifies, assesses, and responds to children at risk of exploitation to improve safeguarding and reduce harm
RJ	Restorative Justice, an approach that brings together those harmed and those responsible for harm to repair relationships and promote accountability
VRP	Violence Reduction Partnership, a multi-agency collaboration that works to prevent and reduce serious violence through early intervention, data sharing, and targeted support.
ECM	Enhanced Case Management, an intensive, trauma-informed approach providing coordinated multi-agency support to children with the most complex needs to reduce risk and improve outcomes
Outcome 23	a police outcome used where a case is deferred or paused (often for youth diversion), allowing a child to engage in intervention before a final decision is made.
DTO	Detention and Training Order, a custodial sentence for children combining a period in custody with supervised support in the community upon release
YOI	Young offender institution, a secure custodial setting for children aged 15–17 serving a detention sentence.

MINUTE EXTRACT
CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

20 **MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL**

The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced a report, which provided for consideration of revisions to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations within the Constitution. These revisions were further to the statutory recommendations contained in the External Auditor's Annual Report, presented to Full Council on 2nd March 2026.

The Interim Monitoring Officer explained to Members the steps officers had taken since the statutory recommendations, particularly number four, had been presented and agreed at Full Council. Officers had engaged with Group Leaders, the Senior Leadership team, and the wider member and officer groups via surveys. Responses had been positive but some issues had been highlighted for improvement, particularly within the Protocol. Alongside this piece of work, further work was being undertaken on member and officer learning and development.

Members discussed the amount of survey responses from members, and it was agreed that the spokespersons on this committee would take back the reminder for members to engage with survey work to their respective groups. Members discussed the distinction between the roles of officers and members, and noted the key principles of mutual respect and civility underpinning the Protocol.

Members discussed the wording at paragraph 8.1 of the Protocol, and it was agreed that the wording be amended to ensure that ward councillors were involved in advance of matters affecting their wards.

Paragraph 8.1 would therefore read:

"Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue, all the Members representing the Ward or Wards affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend the meeting. Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise on a local issue, the Ward Members should be notified **at the preparatory stage** the outset of the exercise."

Therefore on a motion proposed by Councillor Cox, and seconded by Councillor Davies, it was -

Resolved – That the Constitution and Standards Committee approves the revisions as set out within Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the amendment

to paragraph 8.1 as agreed by the Committee, and refers the matter to Full Council for agreement at the next meeting.

WIRRAL

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 September 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS**
REPORT OF:	**INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides for considerations revisions to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations within the Constitution. These revisions are further to the recommendations contained in the External Auditor's Annual Report, presented to Full Council on 2nd March 2026.

This report contributes to the delivery of all draft Wirral Council Plan 2027 - 2031 priorities by promoting good working relationships between Members and Officers across the Council.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Constitution and Standards Committee is recommended to approve the revisions as set out within Appendix 1 of this report, and refer the matter to Full Council for agreement at the next meeting.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 The Committee are requested to consider the recommendations detailed in the report and recommend that they be submitted to the Council Meeting in October 2026 for approval. Agreed changes will be incorporated into a revised Constitution.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 These revisions have been proposed following statutory recommendations given by the External Auditors, which have been issued under Section 24 and Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Consequently, no alternative options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 On the 2nd March 2026, the Council's external auditors Grant Thornton, presented their Annual Report for 2024/25, which included Statutory Recommendations issued under Section 24 and Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the Council. The recommendations related to financial sustainability and governance. Management responses to these recommendations were included in the Auditor's Annual Report. The full report was also presented to Audit and Risk Management Committee on 19 February 2026.

3.2 Statutory recommendation four stated that the Council should take immediate steps to re-build trust between officers and members and reinforce the effective operation of its Protocol for Member/Officer Relations. Council agreed to the statutory recommendations and it was agreed that the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations would be revised alongside work undertaken with officers and members.

3.3 As part of the preparatory work, discussions have been held with the Senior Leadership Team, Group and Deputy Leaders and the Member Support Steering Group.

3.4 Surveys had been undertaken to understand the views of Members and Officers separately. Of the 66 members of the Council, 37 members responded to the survey; 47 senior Officers of the Council were consulted as part of the officer survey.

3.5 Generally, responses to the survey were positive. However, one of the issues highlighted within both surveys was that a significant number of Members and Officers felt that communication between Members and Officers must be improved. Members and Officers broadly expressed the view that they understood the process for raising issues and concerns in line with the protocol but that when complaints were made or issues of concerns raised, the feedback process needed to be improved. This has been a consideration when revising the Protocol.

3.6 Members should note that aside from the suggested revisions to the protocol, further work is being undertaken in respect to both Officer and Member Learning and Development. Proposals have been discussed at length with Group Leaders and the

Member Support Steering Group. Revisions to training programmes will be implemented throughout the remainder of the municipal year, supported by a revised New Member Induction Programme and a new Member Learning and Development Programme for the 2027 municipal year.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implication arising from the recommendations detailed in this report

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Part 3, Section A of the constitution details those functions which are reserved to the Council Meeting. Point 2 (k) stipulates those significant changes to the Council's Constitution, include adopting and amending standing orders, Rules of Procedure, Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, Codes and Protocols that make up the Constitution.

5.2 Should the Constitution & Standards Committee conclude that the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations be amended, then a recommendation must be made to the Council for a final decision.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no foreseen risks arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Governance Working Group has been consulted and recommended the proposed changes, in consultation with the Interim Monitoring Officer.

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. An Equality Impact Assessment 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 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct environment, biodiversity or climate change implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from this report.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are on direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Daphne Courtenage**
Principal Democratic Services Officer

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Revised Protocol for Member/Officer Relations

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution
Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
Wirral Council External Auditor's Annual Audit Report 2024/25
External Auditors Statutory Recommendations and Management Comments

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Full Council Audit and Risk Management Committee	2 March 2026 19 February 2026

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PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS

Content:

1. Introduction
2. Members
3. Officers
4. Officer advice to Groups of Members
5. Support Services to Members and Party Groups
6. Correspondence
7. Press and Media
8. Involvement of Ward Councillors
9. Complaints Procedure for Members
10. Complaints Procedure for Officers
11. Breaches of the Protocol
12. Members' Access to Information and to Council Documents

Deleted: The Relationship

Deleted: Breaches of the Protocol

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another; to define their respective roles, and to provide guidance for dealing with particular issues that may most commonly arise or cause concern.

1.2 Given the variety and complexity of such relations, the Protocol does not seek to be prescriptive and it may not cover all situations. It is hoped, however, that the general approach set out in this Protocol will serve as a guide in dealing with other issues that may not be specifically covered.

1.3 It is hoped that the Protocol will help build and maintain good working relationships between Members and Officers as they work together. Employees who are required to give advice to members are referred to as "Officers" throughout.

1.4 A strong, constructive, and trusting relationship between Members and Officers is essential to the effective and efficient working of the Council.

1.5 This protocol also seeks to reflect the principles underlying the respective Codes of Conduct which apply to Members and Officers. The shared object of these codes is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of Local Government and they therefore demand very high standards of personal conduct.

1.6 Mutual respect between Councillors and Officers is essential to good Local Government. It is important that any dealings between Members and Officers should observe reasonable standards of courtesy and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position. Close personal familiarity between individual Councillors and Officers can damage this relationship and prove embarrassing to other Councillors and Officers. Training on appropriate Member/Officer relationships will be offered to all Members and Officers and this is encouraged to be taken up.

1.7 The provisions of this Protocol will be interpreted having regard to the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct, the Officers' Code of Conduct, the Council's Whistleblowing Protocol and the Council's policies, procedures and processes.

1.8 At the heart of the Codes, and this Protocol, is the importance of mutual respect and also of civility. Councillors should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an officer, or of officers collectively, in a manner that is incompatible with this Protocol at meetings held in public. This is a long-standing tradition in public service. An officer has no means of responding to criticisms like this in public.

1.9 Neither should an officer raise with a councillor matters relating to the conduct or capability of another officer or to the internal management of the section or Directorate in a manner that is incompatible with the objectives of this Protocol.

1.10 A Member who is unhappy about the actions taken by, or conduct of, an officer should:

- avoid personal attacks on, or abuse of, the officer at all times,
- ensure that any criticism is well founded and constructive,
- ensure that any criticism is made in private,
- take up the concern with the appropriate Director or Deputy Chief Officer.
- If the matter is of a particularly serious nature to inform the Chief Executive

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Deleted: 1.4 The following extract from the beginning of the previous national guidance on conduct for councillors remains relevant in its description that: ¶
¶
"1. Both Councillors and Officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another. But their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to Councillors and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the council, their committees and sub-committees. ¶
¶
"2. Mutual respect between Councillors and Officers is essential to good local government." ¶

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2. Members

2.1 The roles of Members and Officers are different, but complementary. Both Members and Officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another, but their responsibilities are distinct. Members are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council as a whole, and they are accountable to the Chief Executive. Their job is to give advice to Members and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and Committees.

Deleted: 2.1 Mutual respect between Councillors and Officers is essential to good Local Government. Close personal familiarity between individual Councillors and Officers can damage this relationship and prove embarrassing to other Councillors and Officers. ¶

2.2 There are a number of crucial roles for Members. Four in particular can be summarised as follows:

a) To provide strong leadership for communities and to contribute to policy and budget decisions of the Full Council, suggest policy improvements and scrutinise policy proposals and their implementation;
b) To monitor and review the Council's performance in implementing approved policy and in delivering services and projects;
c) To represent their constituents, promoting and communicating the interests of the electorate within the Council decision-making processes and dealing with their day-to-day problems and concerns as they arise; and
d) To represent the Council externally on joint committees and on key partner and other outside bodies.

2.3 Members should focus on the strategic direction of the Council and not get involved in the day-to-day operational management of services. However, this does not limit their ability to scrutinise performance and outcomes of Council services. Equally, Officers should not get involved in politics and should expect scrutiny from Members.

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2.4 In line with the Code of Conduct, as set out in Part 5(1) of this Constitution, a Member must treat others with respect and must not do anything which compromises, or is likely to compromise, the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Council.

2.5 It should be recognised that Members do not, as elected or co-opted Members, have any special protection from civil or criminal liability and must not engage in behaviour such as bullying, harassment, slander or libel. While statements made during Council and Committee meetings may be protected by qualified legal privilege, this protection only applies where certain conditions are met, including that statements are made honestly, believed to be true, and without malice. Anyone, including officers and members of the public, may report an alleged breach of the Member's Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer and/or pursue private civil action against a Member.

2.6 Officers can expect Members:

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- to act within the policies, practices, processes and conventions established by the Council
- to work constructively in partnership with Officers acknowledging their separate and distinct roles and responsibilities
- to understand and support the respective roles and responsibilities of Officers and their associated workloads, pressures and reporting lines

- to give political leadership and direction and to seek to further their agreed policies and objectives with the understanding that Members have the right to take the final decision in issues based on advice to treat them fairly and with respect, dignity and courtesy
- to act with integrity, to give support and to respect appropriate confidentiality
- to recognise that Officers work to the instructions of their Senior Officers and not to individual Members
- not to subject them to intimidation, harassment, or put them under undue pressure to do anything which they are not empowered to do, or which is against the Officer's professional judgement, or to undertake work outside normal duties or normal hours.
- Members will have regard to the seniority of Officers in determining what are reasonable requests, having regard to the relationship between the Member and Officer, and the potential vulnerability of Officers, particularly at junior levels
- not to request them to exercise discretion which involves acting outside the Council's policies and procedures
- not to authorise, initiate, or certify any financial transactions or to enter into any contract, agreement or undertaking on behalf of the Council or in their role as a Member without proper and lawful authority
- not to use their position or relationship with Officers to advance their personal interest or those of others or to influence decisions improperly
- to comply at all times with the Members Code of Conduct, the law, the Constitution and such other policies, procedures, protocols and conventions agreed by the Council.

2.7 It is important that Members of the Authority:

- respect the impartiality of Officers and not undermine their role in carrying out their duties
- do not ask Officers to undertake work, or act in a way, which seeks to support or benefit a particular political party or gives rise to an Officer being criticised for operating in a party political manner
- do not ask Officers to exceed their authority where that authority is given to them in law, by the Council or by their Managers

2.8 The Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance (section 151) Officer and other Statutory Officers have specific responsibilities placed on them by law. These responsibilities go beyond their obligations as employees of the Council. Where an Officer is discharging his/her responsibilities under any statutory office a Member or Members shall not:

- improperly interfere with or obstruct the Officer in exercising those responsibilities
- victimise any Officer who is discharging or has discharged his/her responsibilities of the Statutory Office

3. Officers

3.1 Officers serve the whole Council. They support and advise the Council, and the constituent parts of its decision-making machinery; implement Council decisions and may themselves take decisions formally delegated to them through the approved Scheme of Delegation. All Officers are required to be politically neutral, and for senior Officers and roles which closely work with Members, this is enforced through the political restrictions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This position is also enshrined in the Council Officers' Code of Conduct which forms part of the Council's Constitution.

Deleted: The primary role of Officers is to advise, inform and support all members and to implement the lawfully agreed policies of the Council.

3.2 Officers are responsible for day-to-day managerial and operational decisions within the Council. Members should avoid being involved in such decisions and should instead be involved in raising questions and challenging Officers in a robust but fair manner. If a Member was deemed to be inappropriately involved with day-to-day managerial and operational decisions, officers would consult with the Chief Executive.

Deleted: inappropriate involvement in such matters.

3.3 In performing their role Officers will act professionally, impartially and with political neutrality. Whilst Officers will respect a Member's view on an issue, the Officer should not be influenced or pressured to make comments, or recommendations which are contrary to their professional judgement or views.

3.4 Officers should:

- implement decisions of the Council and its subordinate bodies which are lawful, which have been properly approved in accordance with the requirements of the law and the Council's Constitution and are duly recorded.
- work in partnership with Members in an impartial and professional manner
- assist and advise all parts of the Council. Officers must always act to the best of their abilities in the best interests of the authority as expressed in the Council's formal decisions.
- respond to enquiries and complaints in accordance with the Council's standards protocol
- be alert to issues which are, or are likely to be, contentious or politically sensitive, and be aware of the implications for Members, the media or other sections of the public.
- act with honesty, respect, dignity and courtesy at all times
- provide support and learning and development opportunities for Members to help them in performing their various roles
- not seek to use their relationship with Members to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly
- comply, at all times, with the Officer Code of Conduct, and such other Policies or Procedures approved by the Council

3.5 Officers have the right not to support Members in any role other than that of Member, and not to engage in actions incompatible with this Protocol. In particular, there is a statutory limitation on Officers' involvement in political activities.

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4. Officer Advice to Groups of Members

4.1 There is statutory recognition of political party groups, and officers may be asked to provide information and advice to support their consideration of Council business before it is formally considered by the relevant decision-making body. This may include meetings with a Chair, Spokesperson, or a full party group meeting.

4.2 Requests for officer attendance or advice should be made through the relevant Group Leader, Chair or Spokesperson and directed to the appropriate Chief Officer or their nominee. Where an officer provides advice to one political group on a matter, they should not refuse a similar request from another group on the same issue. However, they are not required to offer such advice proactively.

4.3 When attending party group meetings:

- Officers must only provide information and advice relating to Council business and only matters relating to Council business should be discussed when officers are in attendance.
- Advice given to a party group does not replace all the relevant information and advice that must be provided to the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee when the matter in question is considered.
- Party groups cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council and conclusions reached at such meetings should not be interpreted or acted upon as such.
- Officers must be informed if non-Councillors will be present and may decline to provide advice where access to information rules apply.
- Officers must maintain the confidentiality of party group discussions and should not relay the content of any such discussion to another party group, unless agreed otherwise.

4.4 Committee Chairs and Chief Officers should maintain a close and effective working relationship. However, this must not compromise, or appear to compromise, the officer's impartiality towards other Members or political groups.

4.5 Chairs and Spokespersons will normally be consulted during the preparation of Committee agendas. However, in some situations an Officer will be under a duty to submit a report on a particular matter. Officers will remain responsible for the content of reports issued in their name. Any disputes should be referred to the Chief Executive for resolution.

4.6 Where authority is delegated to an officer, any resulting decision remains the responsibility of that officer, even where consultation with Members is required. The officer is accountable for the decision.

5. Support Services to Members and Party Groups

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Deleted: There is a statutory recognition for party groups and officers may be properly called upon to support and contribute to deliberations by party groups when giving preliminary consideration to matters of Council of business in advance of its consideration by the relevant Council decision making body. This could be a meeting with a Chair or Spokesperson or a full party group meeting.

Deleted: Any requests for advice or attendance is to be directed through the Group Leaders or Chairs/Spokespersons for the relevant Committee. The request shall be made to the relevant Chief Officer or, in their absence, to their deputy or the next appropriate lower tier officer. An officer accepting an invitation to one political group or individual will not decline an invitation to advise another political group or individual on the same subject, although the Officer is not obliged to offer to advise another political group on the same subject.

Deleted: It is important that the following factors are taken into consideration when an officer attends a party group meeting:¶
¶
Officer support in these circumstances must not extend beyond providing information and advice in relation to matters of Council business and only matters relating to Council business should be discussed when officers are in attendance.¶
Where Officers provide information and advice to a party group meeting in relation to a matter of Council business, this cannot act as a substitute for providing all necessary information and advice to the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee when the matter in question is considered.¶
Party Group Meetings are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council and conclusions reached at such meetings should not be interpreted or acted upon as such.¶ ...

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Deleted: It is clearly important that there should be a close working relationship between the Chair of a Committee and the Chief Officers who support that Committee. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the Officers' ability to deal impartially with other Members and other Party Groups.

Deleted: Whilst the Chair of a Committee (or Sub-Committee) will routinely be consulted as part of the process of drawing up the agenda for a forthcoming meeting, usually together with the Spokespersons of a Committee, it must be recognised that in some situations an Officer will be under a duty to submit a report on a particular matter. Similarly, an Officer will always be fully responsible for the contents of any ...

Deleted: The Council's delegation scheme and resolutions passed at Committee meetings authorise a named officer to take action, sometimes in consultation with one or more Members such as the Chair and Vice-Chair of a Committee. In these circumstances it is the officer, rather than the Member, who takes the decision or action and it is the officer who is accountable for it.

5.1 The only basis on which the Council can lawfully provide support services (e.g. stationery, typing, printing, photocopying, transport, etc.) to Members is to assist them in discharging their role as members of the Council. Such support services must therefore only be used on Council business. They should never be used in connection with party political or campaigning activity or for private purposes.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Correspondence between an individual Member and an Officer should not normally be copied (by the officer) to any other Member. Where exceptionally it is necessary to copy the correspondence to another Member, this should be made clear to the original Member. In other words, a system of "silent copies" should not be employed. Acknowledging that the "BCC" system of e-mailing is used, it should be made clear at the foot of any e-mails if another Member has received an e-mail by adding "cc Councillor x."

6.2 Official letters or emails on behalf of the Council should normally be sent out over the name of the appropriate Officer, rather than over the name of a Member. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. representations to a Government Minister) for a letter or email to appear over the name of a Member, but this should be the exception rather than the norm. Letters or emails which, for example, create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a Member.

6.3 Correspondence to individual Members from officers concerning regulatory matters such as planning, enforcement, licensing and environmental health matters should not be sent or copied to complainants or other third parties if they are marked "confidential". In doing so, the relevant officer should seek to make clear what is to be treated as being shared with the Member in confidence only and why that is so.

6.4 Members and Officers should clearly state on any written correspondence if there is an expectation that information should be treated confidentially. Any breaches of confidentiality by Members will be dealt in accordance with the Member Code of Conduct and for Officers in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure Rules

7. Press and Media

7.1 The Council's full guidance on dealing with the press and media is set out in the Press and Media Protocol (Part XXX of the Constitution). The main points are summarised below.

7.2 The Council must comply with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1986 ("the Act") regarding publicity. All media relations work will comply with the national Code of Practice for Local Government Publicity. The Code is statutory guidance and the Council must have regard to it and follow its provisions when making any decision on publicity.

Deleted: The full guidance on the Council's policy towards interaction with the press and media can be found within the Press and Media Protocol contained at Part 5(4) of this Constitution. In summary, it is required as follows.

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Deleted: The Council must comply with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1986 ("the Act") regarding publicity. All media relations work will comply with the national Code of Practice for Local Government Publicity. The Code is statutory guidance and the Council must have regard to it and follow its provisions when making any decision on publicity.

7.3 The Leader, Deputy-Leader and Chairs act as spokespersons for the Council in responding to the press and media and making public statements on behalf of the Council, and should liaise with the Communications team on all forms of contact with the press and media.

7.4 Chief Officers, Deputy Chief Officers or their representatives may respond to media enquiries on service matters. Comments must be confined to the factual and professional aspects of the matter, and must not express, whether overtly or by implication, political comments or views.

7.5 Press releases relating to disputes, major planning matters, court proceedings or complaints that are necessary to clarify the Council's position must be approved by the relevant Chief Officer or the Monitoring Officer.

7.6 Guidance on Members' use of social media is available in the Social Media Protocol (Part XX of the Constitution).

7.7 Members must not use Council resources to publish material that appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

8. Involvement of Ward Councillors

8.1 Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue, all the Members representing the Ward or Wards affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend the meeting. Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise on a local issue, the Ward Members should be notified at the preparatory stage of the exercise.

9. Complaints Procedure for Members

9.1 Where a Member is dissatisfied with the conduct, behaviour or performance of an Officer, the matter should be raised with the appropriate Director or Deputy Chief Officer. Where the Officer concerned is a Director or Deputy Chief Officer, the matter should be raised with the Chief Executive. Where the employee concerned is the Chief Executive, the matter should be raised with the Monitoring Officer.

9.2 The relevant senior Officer will ensure that the complainant receives a written acknowledgment of the complaint. Any action taken is a matter for the senior officer and must follow the Council's policies and procedures. Where appropriate, the relevant senior Officer will share any outcomes and resolution of the complaint.

9.3 Where the relationship between Members and Officers breaks down or becomes strained, every effort will be made to resolve matters informally, through conciliation by an appropriate senior manager or Members.

10. Complaints Procedure for Officers

10.1 Where an officer feels that he or she has not been properly treated with respect and courtesy, or is concerned about any action or statement relating to him/herself or a colleague by a councillor, they should raise the matter with their line manager, Director or the Chief Executive as appropriate. In these circumstances the Chief

Deleted: The Leader, Deputy-Leader and Chairs should liaise with the Communications Team on all forms of contact with the press and media. Annexed to this protocol is a note on the practice for the issue of press releases.

Deleted: A Chief Officer or Deputy Chief Officer or nominated representative may respond to press enquiries but should confine any comments to the facts of the subject matter and the professional aspects of the function concerned. On no account must an officer expressly or impliedly make any political opinion, comment or statement.

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Deleted: Any press release that may be necessary to clarify the Council's position in relation to disputes, major planning developments, court issues or individuals' complaints should be approved by the appropriate Chief Officer or the Monitoring Officer.

Deleted: For more detailed information and guidance regarding the role of Members in connection with the use of social media, reference should be made to the Council's Social Media Protocol contained as an Annexe to the Press and Media Protocol as Part 5(4)(a) of this Constitution.

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Executive or Director will take appropriate action either by approaching the individual councillor and/or the party group leader.*

[*In the event that the Subject Member is the Political Group Leader, the Chief Executive or Director shall notify the relevant Deputy Political Group Leader; in the event that the Subject Members are both the Political Group Leader and Deputy Political Group Leader, the Chief Executive or Director shall notify the next most relevant senior Political Group Official/Spokesperson.]

10.2 The relevant senior Officer will ensure that the complainant receives a written acknowledgment of the complaint. Where appropriate, the relevant senior Officer will share any outcomes and resolution of the complaint. If the Officer is not satisfied with the response, they may take the matter up with the Chief Executive. These provisions do not affect an Officer's right to make a formal complaint under the Code of Conduct for Members to the Monitoring Officer.

10.3 Officers will also have recourse to the Grievance Procedure or to the Council's Monitoring Officer, as appropriate. In the event of a grievance or complaint being upheld, the matter will be referred to the Chief Executive who, having advised the Leader of the Council and the appropriate Group Leader(s), will decide on the course of action to be taken, following consultation with the Constitution and Standards Committee if appropriate.

11. Breaches of this Protocol

11.1 Breaches of this Protocol by a Member may constitute a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

11.2 Breaches of this Protocol by an Officer may be referred for disciplinary action.

12. Members' Access to Information and to Council Documents

12.1 Subject to the Access to Information Procedure Rules, Members may request information, explanations and advice from the relevant Chief Officer, Deputy Chief Officer or nominated representative to help them carry out their role as members of the Council. Any in-person meetings should be arranged in advance.

12.2 Members have a legal right to access certain Council documents where there is a legitimate "need to know", but do not have unrestricted rights to inspect all Council records and must be able to justify their request.

12.3 Information should be provided in a timely manner, subject to available resources, and Members should ensure requests are reasonable in both volume and scope. Chief Officers should keep Members informed of significant Council and ward matters, and Committee Chairs should be made aware of information requests that may be raised at future meetings.

12.4 Members may also seek confidential advice from the Chief Executive or relevant Chief Officer on constituency matters.

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12.5 Under the Code of Conduct, information given to the Member in confidence by anyone, or information which the Member believes, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, must not be disclosed unless the Member has appropriate consent, is legally required to do so, is seeking professional advice under confidentiality arrangements, or the disclosure is lawful, in the public interest, and made in good faith.

12.6 In order to safeguard against possible breaches of the Data Protection Legislation (which applies to all information of a personal nature) a member should always seek advice from the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer before disclosing confidential information. Generally personal information cannot be released without the consent of the person to whom it relates. Improper disclosure of confidential information can put the member and the Council at legal and financial risk.

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MINUTE EXTRACT
CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

21 REVISIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Interim Monitoring Officer presented a report, which provided a summary of the discussions held by the Governance Working Group in respect to the proposed changes to the Constitution. The proposed changes were in relation to:

- Part 3 (B) – Committee Terms of Reference
- Part 3 (C) – Overview and Scheme of Delegations of Authority to Officers
- Part 4 (1) – Council Procedure Rules
- Part 4 (5) – Financial Regulations

The report also provided a summary of the proposed Planning Scheme of Management, as well as the Scheme of Delegation to Pensions Officers.

These amendments were necessitated by changes to legislation under the Pensions Act 2026 and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. The Pensions Committee and the Local Pensions Board had endorsed the changes that had been referred. Regarding the Planning changes, these regulations were to come into effect on the 31 October 2026 and would introduce a new National Scheme of Delegation, which would impact on the types of applications determined either by officers or by the Planning Committee. Due to these changes, several sections of the Constitution had been proposed to be amended.

Members raised concerns over the proposed Planning Regulations. It was noted that these changes were due to changes in legislation and there was a need for publicity to ensure that both councillors and the public were aware of the impact of the changes.

Resolved – That the Constitution and Standards Committee approves that the proposed amendments to the Constitution, as detailed in sections 3.2 – 3.16 of this report, be referred to the Full Council for consideration and approval at the meeting of 12 October 2026.

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WIRRAL

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 September 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**REVISIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION**
REPORT OF:	**HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES (INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER)**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the discussions held by the Governance Working Group in respect to the proposed changes to the Constitution. The proposed changes are in relation to:

- Part 3 (B) – Committee Terms of Reference
- Part 4 (1) – Council Procedure Rules
- Part 4 (5) – Financial Regulations
- Part 5 (2) – Members Code on Planning

This report also provides a summary of proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to officers for the determination of planning applications and planning related matters, as well as the Scheme of Delegation to Pensions Officers.

This report contributes to the delivery of all draft Wirral Council Plan 2027 - 2031 priorities by ensuring that the Council's decision-making process is as effective as possible.

This matter affects all wards. It is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Constitution and Standards Committee is recommended to approve that the proposed amendments to the Constitution, as detailed in sections 3.2 – 3.16 of this report, be referred to the Full Council for consideration and approval at the meeting of 12 October 2026.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 Following the publication of the Pensions Schemes Act 2026 and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 ("the Planning Regulations"), it is now essential that the necessary changes to the Council's Constitution are implemented to ensure that the Council and its committees are complaint with the requirements of the relevant legislation and guidance when they come into effect.

1.2 The Pension Schemes Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and gives effect to changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, in particular, the LGPS (Pooling, management and investment of funds) Regulations and the LGPS (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2026. These Regulations require fundamental changes to the governance and management of Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) assets and it is essential that necessary changes to the constitution of Wirral Council are implemented to ensure that Wirral Council and Pensions Committee is compliant with the requirements of the relevant legislation and guidance when it comes into effect.

1.3 The Constitution and Standards Committee is requested to consider the recommendations detailed in the report and recommend that they be submitted to the Full Council for approval at its next available meeting. All changes, if agreed, will be incorporated into a revised Constitution which will be published following Full Council's consideration and approval.

1.4 While Schemes of Delegation are not constitutional documents and would not normally be included in this report, it has been deemed appropriate to do so in order for members to be consulted on and approve these changes, as is recommended under Part 3 (C) of the Constitution.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 In accordance with Article 12 of the Constitution paragraph 12.3 (c)(i), the Monitoring Officer is obliged to keep the Council's Constitution up to date.

2.2 The members could determine not to accept this latest, series of recommendations set out in this report. However, this is not recommended. This is due to the potential risk of legal challenge to any decision made by either committee not in accordance with the regulations and legislation.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Sections of the Constitution for review have been referred to the Governance Working Group. All recommendations are detailed within this report for endorsement by the Constitution and Standards Committee before a revised Constitution is presented to the Full Council for approval.

Pensions Committee

3.2 The Pensions Committee received a report at their meeting on the 22 June 2026 which detailed the changes and reasons for these as a result of new regulations and guidance.

3.3 The principal change is that the Merseyside, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire Local Government Pension Funds will have to set up an investment management company (Northern LGPS Ltd) authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority which will manage on behalf of the three Funds their investments in accordance with the statutory requirements and guidance.

3.4 Some of the other material changes include requiring Wirral Council to:

- appoint a senior LGPS officer who has a senior responsibility across all pension functions of the authority;
- appoint an independent person to support the pensions committee, the senior LGPS officer and the local pension board;
- commission independent governance reviews of the pension fund;
- ensure minimum standards of knowledge and understanding for relevant persons (which includes elected Members).

3.5 The Pensions Committee, as well as the Local Pension Board, endorsed the changes and have referred the matter to this committee for consideration.

3.6 However, since the report was referred by the Pensions Committee, statutory guidance has now been published which has necessitated further amendments to both the Committee's Terms of Reference as well as the Scheme of Delegation to its officers. Due to statutory timescales, it has not been possible to bring these further amendments back to the Pensions Committee and so it is for the Constitution and Standards Committee to agree to these further amendments.

3.7 The revised terms of reference for the Pensions Committee and the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers can be found at Appendix 1 and 2 of this report. The report presented to committee, along with the minute extract of this meeting, can be found at Appendix 3.

Planning Committee

3.8 On 1 June 2026, government issued draft regulations known as the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (hereinafter referred to as the Planning Regulations). These regulations come into effect on 31 October 2026 and introduce a new national scheme of delegation. The national scheme of delegation specifies that some planning application types will not be determined by the Planning Committee and that some planning application types may be determined by the Planning Committee, subject to a "gateway test".

3.9 It is for each Council to re-draft its Constitution to accord with the Planning Regulations and each Council is free, to some extent, to define their own gateway test provided that such a test accords with the regulations.

3.10 Government guidance has made clear that "…where local planning authorities do not comply with the Regulations from the date they come into force (31 October 2026) and their planning committees make decisions on applications which must be delegated [to] officers, those decisions may be subject to judicial review by anyone aggrieved by the decision. This may lead to the quashing of the decision."

3.11 Because of the extent of changes to the way Planning Committee will operate, officers have proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules, specifically standing orders which relate to public speaking. These standing orders are now proposed to not be applicable to Planning Committee and a separate Public Speaking Protocol (?) will be introduced within the Constitution to deal with this matter.

3.12 The revised terms of reference for the Planning Committee can be found at Appendix 1; the revised Scheme of Delegation to officers can be found at Appendix 4; the revised Council Procedure Rules can be found at Appendix 5 and the proposed new Public Speaking Protocol for Planning Committee can be found at Appendix 6.

Financial Regulations

3.13 Officers within the Finance Directorate advised that amendments were required to the Budget and Policy Framework ahead of the overall changes to the Constitution due to the change in governance arrangements. Most changes are minor narrative changes or corrections.

3.14 In addition to the minor changes, there have also been changes proposed to the settlement of insurance claims as these limits had not been reviewed for a number of years. These proposed changes are to reflect increasing claim values and excess levels for casualty claims. The proposed changes also include changing the committee approval from Audit and Risk Management Committee to Policy and Resources Committee, as all other items go to that committee for final approval.

3.15 Finally, more detail and approval changes have been proposed to the section on Risk Management

3.16 The revised Financial Regulations can be found at Appendix 7 of this report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 However, there may be future implications if these recommendations are approved. For instance, the appointment of an Independent Person to the Pensions Committee, or Planning decisions made which did not comply with the regulations from the date they come into force which could be subject to judicial review by anyone aggrieved by the decision, and if the decision were to be quashed could result in associated financial implications in defending decisions.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Part 3, Section A of the constitution details those functions which are reserved to the Council Meeting. Point 2 (k) stipulates those significant changes to the Council's Constitution, include adopting and amending standing orders, Rules of Procedure, Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, Codes and Protocols that make up the Constitution.

5.2 Should the Constitution and Standards Committee conclude that the relevant sections of the Constitution be amended, then a recommendation must be made to the Full Council for a final decision.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from the recommendations of this report, however as at paragraph 4.2, there may be future implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no direct risks arising from the recommendations of this report, however as at paragraph 4.2 of this report and paragraph 7 set out within the report attached at Appendix 3, there may be future risks if the necessary changes are not made within the time limits set by government.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Governance Working Group have been consulted and recommended the proposed changes, in consultation with the Interim Monitoring Officer.

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. An Equality Impact Assessment 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 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Daphne Courtenage

Principal Democratic Services Officer

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Revised Committee Terms of Reference
Appendix 2 – Revised Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers: Director of Pensions
Appendix 3 – Pensions Committee, 22 June 2026, Report and Minute Extract
Appendix 4 – Revised Scheme of Delegation to officers for the determination of planning applications and planning related matters
Appendix 5 – Revised Council Procedure Rules
Appendix 6 – Public Speaking Protocol for Planning Committee
Appendix 7 – Revised Financial Regulations

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution
Agenda and Minutes of the Pensions Committee, 22 June 2026
The Local Government Pension Scheme (Pooling, Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2026
The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2026
The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council	**22 May 2024** **07 October 2024** **02 December 2024** **21 May 2025** **13 October 2025** **16 March 2026** **20 July 2026**

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RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNCTIONS - (B) COMMITTEES

1. Composition, Terms of Reference and Business of Committees

Full Council is responsible for the exercise of all the functions that are the responsibility of the local authority. A number of decisions have been expressly reserved to a meeting of full Council. Beyond this, in order to operate more effectively as an organisation, the Council has arranged for the discharge of all other of its functions to be conducted by a committee, a sub-committee or an officer of the authority or, in certain cases, by another local authority or public body.

This Section deals with the allocation of responsibility for undertaking those functions of the Council that are not reserved to the full Council itself and have been delegated to a committee. In some cases, the law requires the Council to establish a committee and dictates the way it operates. In most cases, however, the Council decides on the size, terms of reference and membership of its committees and are established pursuant to sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Articles 6,7 and 8 of this Constitution list the standing committees and sub-committees of the Council, which are grouped as Policy and Service Committees from Article 6, which includes the re-consideration of decisions and overview scrutiny matters referred to at Article 7, and the Regulatory Committees and other Committees from Article 8. Each of these has a different set of functions ascribed to it as set out below. The Committees in turn will reserve a number of decisions to themselves or to a sub-committee that might be established but will otherwise delegate their functions to a relevant officer. Committees shall only establish further sub-committees where there is a compelling reason to do so to facilitate the conduct of the Committee`s business and only as may be approved by Council or the Policy and Resources Committee.

The business of Committees and Sub-Committees shall be conducted in accordance with those Council Standing Orders at Part 4(1) of this Constitution. The agenda of any Committee or Sub-Committee shall only include those items of business that require a decision, relate to budget or performance monitoring or which are necessary to discharge their overview and scrutiny function.

Some Committees have statutory or standing advisory or partnership groups associated with them to assist them to carry out their functions, either alone or as part of a formal partnership with other public, community or business bodies.

Described below are the Committees that the Council has established, their terms of reference and details of their membership and approach. The powers and duties that are delegated, listed under the various committees' terms of reference, are across

broad functional descriptions and include powers and duties under all legislation, present and future, within those descriptions and all powers and duties including any statutory re-enactment or modification of the legislation referred to or associated with those functions.

The Leader, Deputy Leader and the Political Group Leaders on the Council, if not members of a Committee, shall be permitted to attend meetings of the Committees and Sub-Committees, but with the right to speak only at the Chair's invitation.

2. **Working Groups Involving Members**

Working groups, review teams and advisory groups may be established by a Committee from time to time to develop recommendations or investigate issues of interest or concern alongside formal Sub-Committees. They shall be for specific purposes and shall be time limited. They will only be established when the matter cannot be undertaken by a relevant Committee and each committee is limited to establishing [two] such committees at any one time.

They usually fall into one of the following categories:

(a) **Panels or groups relating to policy development or service functions**

Usually established to advise about an issue or subject area. The relevant Committee shall specify terms of reference and membership, which may include invited persons holding relevant expertise or knowledge and Members who are not members of the parent Committee.

(b) **Task & Finish Groups**

Small groups of Members appointed by a Committee or Sub-Committee for the purpose of advising the parent committee about either:
(i) an in-depth policy review;
(ii) performance monitoring; or
(iii) responding to a major policy consultation.

The terms of reference and purpose are to be specified by the relevant Committee. A specific standing order is set out at Part 4(4)B of this Constitution in respect of a Policy and Services Committee establishing a panel or working group to undertake its overview and scrutiny review functions.

3. Member Champions

The Council and Committees may approach individual Members to take on a specific role to highlight and enhance an area of that Committee or the Council's terms of reference.

(a) Role

The role of a Member Champion is to become a focus for the Council and Committee, partners, stakeholders and communities in order to:

(i) Raise the profile of that highlighted area of the Council and Committee's functions, and in conjunction with the relevant Member(s), officers and partner(s), support community engagement activities and other related publicity campaigns;

(ii) Liaise with members, public sector partners and other stakeholders to promote key initiatives (as appropriate and required);

(iii) Act as an advocate for that highlighted area of the Council and Committee's functions and be required to familiarise themselves with related matters;

(iv) Seek out and share best practice from other areas of the UK;

(v) Periodically present reports to the members of their Committee or other committees (as necessary and requested) setting out the actions taken and how those actions have contributed to the success and promotion of that highlighted area of the Council and Committee's functions;

(vi) Present, as appropriate, research papers and suggest new initiatives and ideas relating to highlighted area of the Council and Committee's functions for consideration by the Committee(s) or Council.

(b) Appointment

(i) The Council or Committee holding the corresponding functions within its terms of reference may appoint a Member Champion from one of their number. This may be the Chair or any other member of the Committee.

(ii) Where the subject of a Member Champion covers functions across the terms of reference of more than one Committee, the Committees may jointly appoint the Member Champion from either of their Committees' number.

(c) Standing Member Champions

The Council and relevant Committees shall appoint Member Champions to the following roles

(i) Armed Forces Member Champion –The Mayor shall be the standing member Champion in relation to the Armed Forces and the Armed Forces Covenant as part of his/her civic role;

(ii) Heritage Member Champion – The Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee is to appoint a Member Champion in relation to matters concerning the Borough's heritage; and

(iii) Domestic Abuse Member Champion – The Adult Social Care and Health is to jointly appoint a Member Champion in relation to matters concerning domestic violence

(d) Decision making and powers

For the avoidance of doubt, a Member Champion fulfils their role as a member of the relevant Committee and have no individual decision making powers or authority.

(e) Working Arrangements:

(i) Member Champions will liaise as required with the relevant officer lead and the Committee Chair and Spokespersons in relation to their role and activities.

(ii) The Member Champion will follow all appropriate and applicable Council working protocols for engaging with officers, stakeholders and the public.

(iii) The Member Champions shall not do anything that is contrary to or inconsistent with any decision or approach taken by the Committee(s) or the Council.

(iv) Where there is any confusion or difference between the Member Champion views/proposed actions and that of the Committee, the Committee's view/position shall prevail.

(v) Member Champions shall seek advice and guidance from the Council's Senior Leadership Team if they are in doubt or confusion on any issue or matter.

(f) Remuneration:

(i) No allowance or other remuneration shall be paid to Member Champions for performing the role.

(ii) Expenses may be met for engagements with outside bodies or public occasions as approved by the relevant lead officer or the Committee.

POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEES (Articles 6 and 7)

1. **Policy and Resources Committee**

2. **Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee**
3. **Children, Young People and Education Committee**
4. **Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee**
5. **Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee**
6. **Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee**

STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND OTHER COMMITTEES (Article 8)

7. **Planning Committee**
8. **Regulatory and General Purposes Committee**
9. **Licensing Act Committee**

10. **Audit & Risk Management Committee**
11. **Constitution and Standards Committee**
12. **Pensions Committee**

13. **Health and Well Being Board**

14. **Joint Merseyside Police and Crime Panel**

POLICY AND SERVICE COMMITTEES (Articles 6 and 7)

1. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

1.1 **Composition**:

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation. The membership shall include:
(a) the Leader of the Council, who shall be the Chair;
(b) the Deputy Leader of the Council, who shall be Vice-Chair; and
(c) the chairs of each of the other Policy and Services Committees.

1.2 **Terms of Reference**

The Policy and Resources Committee has two main areas of responsibility, which is to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, including making decisions on policies and co-ordinating spend not reserved to full Council, and to maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets.

The Committee is charged by full Council to:-

(a) formulate, co-ordinate and implement corporate policies and strategies and the medium term financial plan (budget), which includes responsibility for any decision:
   (i) that relates to such matters to the extent that they are not reserved to full Council;
   (ii) on any cross-cutting policies that impact on other committee areas;
   (iii) on policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other committee; and
   (iv) to determine any dispute or difference between committees;

(b) provide a co-ordinating role across all other service committees and retain a 'whole-council' view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management, which includes responsibility for a decision:
   (i) that has a major impact on a number of Council services or on the Council as a whole;
   (ii) on any virement between Budget funds (revenue) requested by a Committee or officer in excess of **£500,000**;
   (iii) on any virement between Budget funds (capital) or any amendment to the Capital Programme requested by a Committee or officer in excess of £500,000
   (iv) regarding land and property including major acquisition and disposals, which includes reserved decision making concerning any purchase, sale or transfer of a value in excess of, or likely to exceed, **£**500,000, unless

the Committee has delegated this function in relation to a specified area or business plan as the Committee may determine

(v) regarding companies or limited liability partnerships including acquisition and disposals; and

(vi) which is deemed significant in terms of impact on the Council's revenue or capital (to be determined by the Head of Paid Service and/or Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader);

(c) without limiting the generality of responsibility for cross-cutting policies (at (a) above), lead on behalf of the Council:

(i) in matters concerning relationships with HM Government, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and other major public and non-public bodies;

(d) appoint Council representatives as required;

(e) nominate councillors and other persons to outside bodies; and

(f) undertake responsibility for developing and monitoring the enabling corporate services, including, finance and investment, project support and risk management, strategic procurement and commercial strategies, ICT, property and asset management, human resources and organisational development, law and governance, communications and public affairs, emergency planning and business continuity.

1.3 **Re-consideration**

The Committee additionally holds responsibility for the removal of delegation and reconsideration of decisions made by policy and services committees, or of key decisions made by an officer acting under delegation of those committees, as set out at Article 7 and Part 4(4)(A) of this Constitution.

1.4 **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) **Overview and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(b) **Overview and Scrutiny** – The Committee holds responsibility:

(i) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery; and

(ii) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues

(c) **Stakeholder Engagement** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

1.5 **Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub-Committee**

(a) A Sub-Committee of members of the Policy and Resources, with delegated authority to recommend or make appointments and related matters in respect of chief officers, as set out at Part 4(7) of the Constitution, together with oversight of employment policies, terms and conditions.

(b) The Sub-Committee will not be appointed in accordance with the political balance rules (minute 8(1) of 2020/21 refers) but will consist of:

(i) the Leader (Chair of Policy & Resources Committee), or in their absence the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair), who shall chair the Sub-Committee;

(ii) a member from each of the other Political Groups represented on the Policy & Resources Committee; and

(iii) the Chair, or in their absence the Vice-Chair, of the Policy & Services Committee with terms of reference most closely associated with the post concerned (or if that committee concerned is deemed to be the Policy & Resources Committee then the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair).

1.6 **Other staffing sub-committees**

A sub-committee or panel may be required from time to time to act in relation to Standing Order 7 or 8 of the Employment procedure Rules (disciplinary matters and appeals) set out at Part 4(7) of this Constitution. The membership of any such sub-committee or panel shall be as per 1.5(b) above but may differ or be altered in order to meet with any statutory, contractual or any other legal requirements relating to the post or postholder concerned.

1.7 **Finance Sub-Committee**

A Sub-Committee of five (5) or more members of the Policy and Resources, subject to politically balance, with responsibility for development of the Council's budget and for oversight of the Council's procurement framework

1.8 **Shareholder Board**

A Sub-Committee of three (3) to five (5) members of the Policy and Resources Committee, subject to politically balance, with delegated authority to exercise responsibility for the Council's functions as corporate shareholder of a company, or group of companies, or a limited liability partnership. The Sub-Committee will be organised, and will also meet as a working group, alongside officers and advisors in accordance with the Council's adopted Code of Practice for the Governance of Council Interests in Companies at Part 5(7) of this Constitution.

2. ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

2.1 **Composition:**

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation.

2.2 **Terms of Reference**

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is responsible for the Council's adult social care and preventative and community based services. This includes the commissioning and quality standards of adult social care services, incorporating responsibility for all of the services, from protection to residential care, that help people live fulfilling lives and stay as independent as possible as well as overseeing the protection of vulnerable adults. The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is also responsible for the promotion of the health and wellbeing of the people in the Borough. This includes , in respect of the Health and Social Care Act 2006, the functions to investigate major health issues identified by, or of concern to, the local population.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:-

a) adult social care matters (e.g., people aged 18 or over with eligible social care needs and their carers);

b) promoting choice and independence in the provision of all adult social care

c) 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);

d) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and

e) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to:

   (i) furthering public health objectives through the development of partnerships with other public bodies, community, voluntary and charitable groups and through the improvement and integration of health and social care services;

   (ii) functions under or in connection with partnership arrangements made between the Council and health bodies pursuant to Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 ("the section 75 Agreements")

   (iii) adult social care support for carers;

   (iv) protection for vulnerable adults;

   (v) supporting people;

   (vi) drug and alcohol commissioning;

(vii) mental health services; and

(viii) preventative and response services, including those concerning domestic violence.

f) a shared responsibility with the Children, Young People and Education Committee for ensuring the well-being and support of vulnerable young people and those at risk of harm as they make the transition into adulthood

g) in respect of the Health and Social Care Act 2006, the functions to:

(i) investigate major health issues identified by, or of concern to, the local population.

(ii) consult, be consulted on and respond to substantial changes to local health service provision, including assessing the impact on the local community and health service users.

(iii) scrutinise the impact of interventions on the health of local inhabitants, particularly socially excluded and other minority groups, with the aim of reducing health inequalities.

(iv) maintain an overview of health service delivery against national and local targets, particularly those that improve the public's health.

(v) receive and consider referrals from local Healthwatch on health matters

which are to include the establishment and functioning of joint arrangements as set out at paragraph 15 of this Section.

2.3 **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) **Overview and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(b) **Overview and Scrutiny** – The Committee holds responsibility:

(i) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery;

(ii) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does

not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues; and

(iii) for those overview and scrutiny functions in respect of the Health and Social Care Act 2006 as set out in paragraph g) above which may be conducted by the Joint Committee referred to at paragraphs 14 below.

(c) **Stakeholder Engagement** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

2.4 **Joint Strategic Commissioning Board Sub-Committee**

A Sub-Committee of three (3) or more members of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee, subject to politically balance, to sit in common or jointly with representatives of the National Health Service and to exercise delegated authority on behalf of the Council in respect of:

(a) pooled funding arrangements with the NHS or other governmental bodies;

(b) the place based health and care arrangements as may be provided for by legislation; and

(c) such other commissioning, strategic design quality and performance of health and care services across the Borough of Wirral, including the outcomes and quality of those services,

within the terms of reference of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee, that the Committee may from time to time determine shall be the responsibility of the Sub-Committee.

2.5 **Joint Health and Integrated Care System Scrutiny Committees**

Joint health scrutiny arrangements and protocol are to be agreed between the local authorities of Cheshire and Merseyside being:

- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Knowsley Council
- Liverpool City Council
- St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sefton Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Wirral Borough Council

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is responsible for the Council's functions under the Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements and Protocol, which provide for the establishment, membership and procedures in respect of the following

(a) Joint Heath Scrutiny Committees Protocol

Where a substantial development or variation to health services is deemed to affect more than one of the constituent authorities, a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising of representatives of the authorities in the area affected will be called to meet under the terms of the Protocol. This joint committee will be formally consulted on the health proposal and have the opportunity to comment. Health Overview Scrutiny Committees can write to request that the Secretary of State consider calling in a health proposal. Requests should only be used in exceptional situations where local resolution has not been reached.

(b) **Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System Joint Health Scrutiny Committee Arrangements**

The Arrangements establish a joint committee of all nine constituent authorities. The Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System Joint Health Scrutiny Committee is charged with exercising its functions with a view to supporting the effective planning, provision, and operation of health services at Cheshire and Merseyside level. This will include promoting transparency in how the Integrated Care System (ICS) fulfils its responsibilities within Cheshire and Merseyside.

The overarching role of the Joint Committee is to scrutinise the work of the ICS in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities and functions at Cheshire and Merseyside level in order to support their effective exercise and, where appropriate to make reports or recommendations to the ICS.

3 CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

3.1 **Composition:**

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation, to include:

(i) one representative of the Church of England Diocesan Board and one representative of the Roman Catholic Diocesan Board, who may only vote on education matters;

(ii) two Co-opted Parent Governor Representatives (non-voting)

3.2 **Terms of Reference**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is responsible for services which help keep children and young people safe and fulfil their potential. It incorporates schools and attainment, and social care for children and families. It has a particular focus on those children who are in care, and for whom the Council has corporate parenting responsibility.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:-

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council;

(b) the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education and the Early Years and Schools Forum;

(c) working with all schools (including academies) in relation to raising standards of attainment and developing opportunities;

(d) leading for the Council and its partners in the discharge the Council's functions as Corporate Parent for its children in care and care leavers;

(e) any other functions comprised in partnership arrangements with other bodies connected with the delivery of services for children, young people and families;

(f) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions;

(g) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to:

- child protection;
- children's centres;
- education, schools and settings;

- looked after children;
- mental health services;
- safeguarding;
- special educational needs and disability (SEND);
- youth offending services;
- youth services; and
- social and education transport

3.3 **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) **Overview and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(c) **Overview and Scrutiny** – The Committee holds responsibility

(iv) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery; and

(v) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues

(c) **Stakeholder Engagement** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

3.4 **Corporate Parenting Panel**

A Sub-Committee and Working Group of five (5) or more members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, politically balanced, together with [two] non-voting co-opted young people with recent (within the last five years) direct experience of being looked after by or receiving services as a care leaver from the Council, with delegated authority to exercise responsibility for the Council's functions relating to the delivery by or on behalf of the Council, of Corporate Parenting

functions with the exception of policy decisions which will remain with the Children and Young People's Committee.

4. ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

4.1 **Composition:**

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation.

4.2 **Terms of Reference**

The Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee has responsibility for developing and delivering a vision for Wirral as a place. It is responsible for developing and determining or recommending all planning policies, including the Local Plan, and infrastructure planning. It is also responsible for promoting regeneration, economic development and associated activities, including the tourism, culture and visitor economy, and for removing barriers to growth. It is also responsible for taking a strategic approach to the Council`s various housing functions, including issues concerning social rented and affordable housing, homelessness, allocations and standards of housing.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for:

(a) formulation and delivery of the Council's strategic development objectives for planning, sustainability and transportation;

(b) developing and recommending those plans and strategies which together comprise the Local Plan;

(c) developing and adopting or recommending (if reserved to Council) other spatial planning documents, including but not limited to
  (i) supplementary planning documents (SPD) and planning policy advice notes;
  (ii) Master Plans and development briefs;
  (iii) The Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
  (iv) [The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when applicable];

(d) 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;

(e) the Council's functions and partnerships regarding the promotion of economic growth and the establishment and development of business;

(f) the promotion and development of the economic factors in the area, such as seeking to ensure sufficient and appropriate employment sites, investment, adult skills, apprenticeship schemes, productivity, development sites and so forth;

(g) overseeing the progress of major projects (including major building, infrastructure or other projects involving the erection or significant alteration of major permanent structures or landmarks) undertaken by the Council directly or as

enabler, funder or joint enterprise partner, including but not limited to the Wirral Growth Company LLP;

(h) the Authority's role and functions in relation to strategic and private sector housing policies and as the housing authority, including but not limited to

(i) the Council's Housing Strategy;

(ii) homelessness and the allocation of housing;

(iii) private sector housing, including taking action to remedy overcrowding, disrepair, unfitness and statutory nuisances; to promote fire safety in private sector housing and the Council's functions in relation to houses in multiple occupation;

(iv) licensing schemes;

(v) tenancy relations and the provision of housing advice;

(vi) relationship with Registered Providers of housing;

(vii) housing loans and grants;

(viii) housing related support services;

(ix) policies and actions with a view to reducing and eliminating street homelessness to ensure that appropriate action is taken; and

(x) analysis, development and overview of housing policies in terms of spatial planning to inform the Local Plan and planning policies;

(i) reviewing major projects and any project boards having regard to capacity to deliver, corporate priorities and resources, and advise the Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate;

(j) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and

(k) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

6.3 **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) **Overview and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission

research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(b) **Overview and Scrutiny** – The Committee holds responsibility:

(i) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery; and

(ii) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues

(c) **Stakeholder Engagement** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

5. ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

5.1 Composition:

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation.

5.2 Terms of Reference

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee has responsibility for parks and open spaces, highways management and infrastructure, coastal protection and flood defence and environment and waste matters. It is the Committee that leads on behalf of the Council in responding to and matters concerning the Climate Emergency. The Committee is also responsible for the overview and scrutiny of flood risk management and coastal erosion management functions.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

(a) in co-ordinating the response to cross-cutting sustainability issues such as reducing carbon emissions, air quality issues, climate change response, improving resource efficiency and developing sustainable energy;

(b) in relation to all highways matters and as highway authority, street authority, bridge authority, including but not limited to public open spaces, street furniture on the highway and open spaces or parts of open spaces immediately adjacent to the highway;

(c) in relation to traffic management and transport and as traffic authority, including but not limited to public passenger transport and the co-ordination of transport for service users, traffic orders and rights of way issues;

(d) in relation to parking, including on and off-street parking and civil parking enforcement;

(e) in respect of parks, open spaces, countryside management, allotments, playgrounds and cemeteries, including arboricultural, gardening and warden services;

(f) in relation to the management of authorised and unauthorised sites and encampments, this to include all activities necessary or incidental to the Council's performance of its responsibilities in relation to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers;

(g) in relation to waste and as waste collection authority, litter authority, including but not limited to dealing with litter, street cleansing, abandoned vehicles and dog fouling, and the Council's relationship with Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority (MRWA) as the joint waste disposal authority;

(h) as coast protection authority and lead local flood authority;

(i) in respect of emergency planning and community resilience (infrastructure and contract services);

(j) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and

(k) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

(l) in respect of Section 9JB of the Local Government Act 2000, the functions to review and scrutinise the exercise by risk management authorities of flood risk management and of coastal erosion management functions which may affect the local authority's area.

5.3 **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) **Overview and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(b) **Overview and Scrutiny** – The Committee holds responsibility:

(i) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery;

(ii) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues; and

(iii) for those overview and scrutiny functions in respect of flood and coastal protection as set out in paragraph 5.4(l) above.

(c) **Stakeholder Engagement** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

6. TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

6.1 Composition:

To be determined annually by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation.

6.2 Terms of Reference

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

(a) for customer and community contact services, including various offices and meeting points, customer contact centres and advice and transaction services

(b) community engagement, incorporating the Council's approach to equalities, inclusion communities, neighbourhoods and the voluntary and charitable sector, community wealth building and social value;

(c) in considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;

(d) for the provision and management of leisure, sports and recreation facilities;

(e) for delivery of the authority's library and museums services, including but not limited to art galleries, historic buildings and their gardens and the functions of the Council regarding public records, and the Council's

(f) concerning tourism, the arts, culture and heritage, including provision of theatre, entertainments, conferences and events;

(g) in relation to bereavement services and support to the Coroner's service;

(h) regarding community safety, crime and disorder and all associated matters;

(i) for trading standards and environmental health, including but not limited to:

  (i) consumer protection;

  (ii) product safety;

  (iii) fair trading;

  (iv) metrology;

  (v) food standards and animal health;

  (vi) air pollution control;

  (vii) health and safety at work (except in so far as it relates to the Council as an employer);

  (viii) public conveniences;

(ix) food safety; and

(x) control of nuisances;

(j) in respect of emergency planning and community resilience (community, regulatory and asset services);

(k) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and

(l) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

m) in respect of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the functions to:

(i) review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions; and

(ii) make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions

6.3 **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) **Overview and Policy Development** -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(d) **Overview and Scrutiny** – The Committee holds responsibility:

(i) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery;

(ii) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues; and

(iii) for those overview and scrutiny functions in respect of crime and disorder as set out in paragraph 6.4(m) above which are to include the establishment and functioning of joint arrangements as set out at paragraph 15 of this Section.

(c) **Stakeholder Engagement** - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND OTHER COMMITTEES (Article 8)

7. PLANNING COMMITTEE (DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

7.1 Composition:

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation but this shall not exceed 13 members. There shall be no power to co-opt.

7.2 Terms of Reference

The principal role of the Planning Committee is to act as the administrative committee responsible for making decisions as local planning authority on planning applications, development control and similar regulatory matters, which are more particularly described as Functions relating to town and country planning and development control and related matters as set out at Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

(a) The Committee is charged by full Council to fulfil those functions:

(i) To determine planning applications as listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 ('the Regulations') where the nominated member and nominated officer agree that referral to and determination by Planning Committee is necessary;

(ii) To determine an own interest application as defined in the Regulations where the nominated member and nominated officer agree that referral to and determination by Planning Committee is necessary;

(iii) To determine whether to confirm Tree Preservation Orders where five or more objections have been received;

(iv) To exercise any other function of the Council under the Planning Acts and related legislation, whether as a local planning authority or otherwise, which may be referred to it by the Assistant Director Chief Planner or other officer authorized by him/her.

(b) The Committee shall be responsible for the following regulatory planning related matters including but not limited to:

(i) applications for 'hedgerow removal' (Hedgerow Regulations 1997, as amended);

(ii) applications to undertake works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order or within a Conservation Area (Town and Country Planning Trees Regulations 1999, as amended);

(iii) applications for remedial notices in respect of high hedges (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003, as amended);

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to consider and determine applications for the display of advertisements submitted under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations;¶
to determine whether prior approval applications for the construction, installation, alteration or replacement of telecommunications masts submitted under Part 24 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 should be granted or refused;¶
related matters including but not limited to:¶

(iv) applications for Hazardous Substances Consent (Planning Hazardous Substances Act, 1990, as amended);

(v) the obtaining of particulars of persons interested in land under Section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976;

(vi) powers related to Commons Registration;

(vii) functions relating to public rights of way;

(viii) the licensing and registration functions relating to the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and the Highways Act 1980; and

(ix) functions relating to Town and Village Greens;

7.3 **Methodology**

The process and meetings of the Committee shall also be subject to:

(a) the Members Planning Code;

(b) the requirement that no member of the Committee may participate in the debate or vote in the meeting until or unless that member has attended the mandatory planning training prescribed by the Council;

(c) the Protocol for the Right to Speak at Planning Committee and Strategic Applications Sub-Committee meetings; and

(d) the Planning Scheme of Management.

7.4 **Strategic Applications Sub-Committee**

A Sub-Committee of between six (6) and nine (9) members of the Planning Committee, politically balanced, with responsibility for:

(a) making decisions on planning applications referred to it pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 as listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 where the nominated member and nominated officer agree that referral to and determination by Strategic Applications Sub-Committee is necessary.

(b) Making decisions on an own interest application as defined in the Regulations where the nominated member and nominated officer agree that referral to and determination by Strategic Applications Sub-Committee is necessary.

(c) Making decisions on the implications of major developments outside of the Borough that could have an impact on local residents; and

(d) Consideration of documents relating to the Local Plan and to advise the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee where appropriate.

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<#>applications which, if approved, would represent a significant departure from the policies of the statutory development plan, where they are recommended for approval;¶
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any application where the Director responsible for the planning service considers it inappropriate to exercise delegated powers having regard to the public representations received and consultee responses; and¶
¶
consideration of documents relating to the Local Development Framework and advise the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee (or Housing Committee) where appropriate¶

Deleted: <#>applications which, if approved, represent a significant departure from the policies of the statutory development plan, where they are recommended for approval;¶
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any application where the Director responsible for the planning service considers it inappropriate to exercise delegated powers having regard to the public representations received and consultee responses; and¶
¶
consideration of documents relating to the Local Development Framework and advise the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee (or Housing Committee) where appropriate¶

8 REGULATORY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

8.1 Composition:

Fifteen (15) Members of the Council, which may be altered to accommodate the overall political balance calculation. There shall be no power to co-opt.

8.2 Terms of Reference

The principal role of the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee is as the administrative committee, established as an ordinary committee and acting under delegation pursuant to sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, and responsible for making decisions as licensing and registration authority on all regulatory matters not otherwise delegated to the Planning Committee or reserved to the Licensing Act Committee.

The Committee is charged by full Council to fulfil all of those functions, more particularly described as set out at Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended), and associated matters, including but not limited to:

(a) functions relating to licensing, registration and ancillary matters other than those falling within the remit of the Licensing Act Committee, including but not limited to:
- acupuncture, tattooing, ear-piercing and electrolysis;
- caravan sites;
- charity collections and street collections;
- hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences, drivers and operators;
- entertainments;
- market and street trading,
- pleasure boats and pleasure vessels;
- scrap yards;
- sex shops and sex establishments;
- solemnisation of marriages;
- theatres and cinemas;
- zoos, animal trainers and exhibitors and dangerous wild animals;

(b) functions relating to health and safety at work, to the extent that those functions are discharged otherwise than in the authority's capacity as an employer;

(c) functions relating to sea fisheries;

(d) functions relating to statutory nuisance and contaminated land;

(e) the passing of a resolution that schedule 2 to The Noise and Statutory Nuisance Act 1993 should apply in the authority's area;

(f) commons regulation and town and village greens, the power to apply for an enforcement order against unlawful works on registered common land, the power to protect unclaimed registered common land and unclaimed town or village

greens against unlawful interference and the power to institute proceedings for offences in respect of unclaimed land;

(g) the power to make a closing order on a takeaway food shop;

(h) the obtaining of particulars of persons interested in land under section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976;

(i) functions relating to elections and electoral registration not otherwise reserved to Full Council, including the making of recommendations to the Council as to recommendations to the Secretary of State on ward boundaries;

(j) Power to consider and make recommendations to the Council on matters relating to the name and status of the Borough and individuals; and

(k) making recommendations to Council on the promotion or approval of local bill.

8.3 **Charitable Trusts Sub-Committee**

A Sub-Committee of five (5) members of the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee, politically balanced, with responsibility for the discharge of the Council's functions where it acts as corporate trustee, currently the:

(a) Wirral Borough Council Mayor's Charity

8.4 **Licensing Panels**

Panels of between three (3) and five (5) members of the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee, which shall consist of members of more than one political group but shall otherwise not be subject to political balance (Council minute 30 of 2021/22 refers), with responsibility for the Council's functions to deal with applications, determinations and reviews of licences or registrations, and any related matter, in respect of any licensed activity that is the responsibility of the Authority (other than under the Licensing Act 2003 or the Gambling Act 2005). Up to two (2) further members of the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee may attend as observers.

8.5 **Methodology**

The process and meetings of the Committee will be conducted in accordance with:

(a) guidance on Licensing and Regulatory matters that may be issued;

(b) the requirement that no member of the Committee may participate in the debate or vote in the meeting until or unless that member has attended the mandatory licensing and regulatory training prescribed by the Council;

(c) any protocol adopted for public engagement; and

(d) the scheme of delegation for licensing and regulatory matters

The Committee or a Sub-Committee may regulate, where necessary, its own procedures to deal with any matter arising in connection with its duties, provided that the procedures remain in accordance with the principles set out at Article 13 of this Constitution. This includes that, subject to any statutory rules or procedures detailed elsewhere in the Constitution, a Panel acting as a tribunal is permitted, when all evidence has been submitted and speakers (if any) have finished, will hold discussion in the presence of the speakers and, as appropriate and in compliance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules, the public and press, and the decision making may thereafter be taken in private adjournment.

It is expected that decisions will then normally be announced to those present and remaining post-adjournment, at least in summary form, before a decision is issued in writing.

9 LICENSING ACT COMMITTEE

9.1 Composition:

Fifteen (15) Members of the Council, who will be those same Members as are appointed to the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee (whose appointments must be in accordance with the proportionality rules). Substitute members are not permitted in respect of the Licensing Act Committee. There shall be no power to co-opt.

9.2 Terms of Reference

The principal role of the Licensing Act Committee is to act as the administrative committee, acting under statutory delegation pursuant to the Licensing Act 2003, and responsible for making decisions as licensing authority under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005.

9.3 Licensing Act Sub-Committee

Sub-Committees of three (3) members of the Licensing Act Committee with responsibility for the Council's functions to deal with applications, determinations and reviews of licences, permissions and any related matter in respect of the Licensing Act 2003 or the Gambling Act 2005. Up to two (2) further members of the Licensing Act Committee may attend as observers.

9.4 Methodology

The process and meetings of the Committee will be conducted in accordance with such of the rules set out in Part 4(4) as apply to the Committee under the Licensing Act 2003 and related Regulations and to:

(a) guidance on Licensing and Regulatory matters that may be issued;

(b) no member of the Committee may participate in the debate or vote in the meeting until or unless that member has attended the mandatory licensing and regulatory training prescribed by the Council;

(c) any protocol adopted for public engagement; and

(d) the scheme of delegation for licensing and regulatory matters

The Committee or Sub-Committee may regulate, where necessary, its own procedures to deal with any matter arising in connection with its duties, provided that the procedures remain in accordance with the principles set out at Article 13 of this Constitution. This includes that, subject to any statutory rules or procedures detailed elsewhere, a Panel acting as a tribunal is permitted, when all evidence has been submitted and speakers (if any) have finished, will hold discussion in the presence of the speakers and, as appropriate and in compliance with the Access to information Procedure Rules, the public and press, and the decision making may thereafter be taken in private adjournment.

It is expected that decisions will then normally be announced to those present and remaining post-adjournment, at least in summary form, before a decision is issued in writing.

10 **AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

10.1 **Composition:**

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation, in respect of which:

(a) The membership of the Audit and Risk Management Committee may not include Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, a Chair of a Policy and Services Committee or any other member of the Policy and Resources Committee

(b) Members may not consider decisions as part of the of the Audit and Risk Management Committee that they have made as a member of another Committee. In this case, they should declare an interest and leave the meeting room. If a member feels that there is a particular reason why he or she should participate, a dispensation must be sought from the Constitution and Standards Committee or Monitoring Officer

(c) The Committee will in addition include a person who is not a Member or officer of the Council who shall be a co-opted member of the Committee entitled to speak but not vote at meetings.

10.2 Terms of Reference

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is a key component of Wirral Council's corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The Committee provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is charged by full Council to:-

(a) Governance

(i) Consider the Annual Governance Statement, and be satisfied that this statement is comprehensive, properly reflects the risk and internal control environment, including the system of internal audit, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control, and includes an agreed action plan for improvements where necessary.

(b) Internal Audit and Internal Control

(i) With Chief Officers, to provide proactive leadership and direction on audit governance issues and champion audit and internal control throughout the Council.

(ii) Consider annually the effectiveness of the system of internal audit including Internal Audit Charter, Strategy, Plan of work and performance and that those arrangements are compliant with all applicable statutes and regulations, including the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note.

(iii) Consider the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and a summary of internal audit activity which include an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal controls including risk management, any corporately significant issues arising, and receive assurance that action has been taken as necessary.

(iv) Consider regular summary reports on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and actions in hand as a result of internal audit activity.

(v) Consider reports showing progress against the audit plan and proposed amendments to the audit plan.

(vi) Ensure there are effective relationships between internal audit and external audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.

(c) Risk Management & Control

(i) Provide proactive leadership and direction on risk management governance issues and champion risk management throughout the Council and ensure that the Full Council is kept sufficiently informed to enable it to approve the Council's Risk Management Policy and Framework and that proper insurance exists where appropriate.

(ii) Consider the effectiveness of the system of risk management arrangements.

(iii) Consider an annual report and quarterly reports with respect to risk management including, an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, any corporately significant issues arising, and receive assurance that action has been taken as necessary.

(iv) Receive assurances that action is being taken on risk related issues identified by both internal and external auditors and other inspectors.

(v) Independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk.

(vi) Report to full Council as appropriate.

(d) Anti-Fraud and Corruption

(i) Provide proactive leadership and direction on Anti-Fraud and Corruption and champion Anti-Fraud and Corruption throughout the Council.

(ii) Consider the effectiveness of the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements.

(iii) Consider an annual report and other such reports, including an annual plan on activity with respect to Anti-Fraud and Corruption performance and receive assurances that action is being taken where necessary.

(iv) To be appraised of any steps arising from Whistleblowing investigations and to ensure appropriate actions are being taken and reported.

(e) Annual Statement of Accounts

(i) Consider the external auditor's reports and opinions, relevant requirements of the International Standards on Auditing and any other reports to members with respect to the Accounts, including the Merseyside Pension Fund and approve the Accounts on behalf of the Council and report required actions to the Council. Monitor management action in response to issues raised by the external auditor.

(ii) Consider the External Auditors Annual Governance Report and approve the Letter of Representation with respect to the Accounts and endorse the action plan contained in this Report.

(f) External Audit

(i) Consider any other reports of external audit and other inspection agencies.

(ii) Ensure there are effective relationships between external audit and internal audit.

(iii) To liaise with the Public Sector Audit Appointments over the appointment of the Council's external auditors and make recommendations to Council.

(g) Merseyside Pension Fund

(i) Following presentation to the Pensions Committee and with due regard to any comments and observations made, consider the draft Accounts of the Merseyside Pension Fund and authorise the publication and release of these accounts to the external auditors for the audit by the statutory deadline.

(h) Treasury Management

(i) Consider the effectiveness of the governance, control and risk management arrangements for Treasury Management and ensure that they meet best practice.

(i) Partnerships and other bodies

(i) To deal with any audit or ethical standards issues which may arise in relation to partnership working, joint committees and other local authorities or bodies.

(ii) Ensure that there are effective governance arrangements in place for Wirral Borough Council's wholly owned limited companies and trading vehicles.

(iii) Receive and review the financial statements and dividend policies of any Wirral Borough Council limited companies and to consider recommending corrective action where appropriate

(j) Administration

(i) Review the Committee's own terms of reference no less frequently than annually and where appropriate make recommendations to the Council for changes.

(ii) Ensure members of the committee have sufficient training to effectively undertake the duties of this committee.

(iii) Consider the Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee.

11 CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11.1 Composition:

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council, which may not necessarily be appointed in accordance with the political balance rules (minute 8(1) of 2020/21 refers) but which shall include at least one member nominated by each of the all Political Groups and then otherwise endeavour to reflect political balance.

Four (4) or more persons who are not Members or officers of the Council (Independent Persons), who will not be entitled to vote at meetings.

11.2 Terms of Reference

The Constitution and Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the operation of the Council's Constitution and for promoting and maintaining high standards of ethical conduct and probity within the Council, including the exercise of all functions of the Authority in relation to ethical standards and, in particular, those under Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

(a) to keep the Council's constitutional arrangements under review and to make recommendations as to amendments and improvements to the Council's Constitution, including the codes and protocols;

(b) to oversee and agree such minor and consequential changes to the Council's constitutional arrangements as are recommended by the Monitoring officer from time to time;

(c) to hear and determine complaints against members alleging breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct;

(d) to take an action in respect of a member found to be in breach;

(e) to oversee and approve the operation of the Council's functions relating to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct amongst members and co-opted members of the Council including:

  (i) approving and issuing guidance to Members

  (ii) making recommendations to Full Council regarding the suggested amendment of the Members' Code of Conduct

  (iii) approving training to be provided to members in the Code of Conduct

  (iv) monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct

(f) to approve the granting, to any Council employee, of a dispensation in relation to disqualification from political activities Local Government and Housing Act 1989;

(g) to select and recommend to Council persons for appointment as members of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel;

(h) to select and recommend to Council persons for appointment as an Independent Person;

(i) to receive and approve proposals regarding the Council's exercise of powers covered by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act;

(j) to issue dispensations to any member in respect of statutory and non-statutory disclosable interests;

(k) to monitor and review as necessary the operation of whistleblowing procedures;

(l) to consider reports arising from external inspections, audit investigations, Ombudsman investigations where maladministration is found, legal challenges and other sources which cast doubt on the honesty or integrity of the Council or its Members; and

(m) to consider and make recommendations on such other matters as the Committee itself thinks appropriate or which are referred to it by Council, which further the aim of promoting and maintaining the highest standards of conduct within the Council.

11.3 **Standards Panels**

Sub-Committees of between three (3) and five (5) members of the Constitution and Standards Committee with responsibility for arrangements under which decisions can be made on an allegation that a Member of the Council or its committees has breached the Members' Code of Conduct

The Committee or a Panel may regulate, where necessary, its own procedures to deal with any matter arising in connection with its duties, provided that the procedures remain in accordance with the principles set out at Article 13 of this Constitution. This includes that, subject to any statutory rules or procedures detailed elsewhere, a Panel acting as a tribunal is permitted, when all evidence has been submitted and speakers (if any) have finished, will hold discussion in the presence of the speakers and, as appropriate and in compliance with the Access to information Procedure Rules, the public and press, and the decision making may thereafter be taken in private adjournment.

It is expected that decisions will then normally be announced to those present and remaining post-adjournment, at least in summary form, before a decision is issued in writing.

12 **PENSIONS COMMITTEE**

12.1 Under statutory instrument 1579, the Local Government Reorganisation (Pensions etc.) (Greater Manchester and Merseyside) Order 1987, Wirral Council was appointed as administering authority (AA) for Merseyside Pension Fund.

12.2 The Constitution of the Council, Part 3 Section B, sets out the composition, terms of reference and business of the Pensions Committee.

12.3 **Pensions Context**

12.3.1 Legislation and guidance set out that administering authorities (AAs) need to invest the contributions they collect from employers and employees in the best interests of those scheme members and employers. The phrase "best interests" in the context of pension scheme investments will typically mean "the best financial interests" of scheme members; referred to as fiduciary duty. Value, risk and yield of investments should therefore drive an AA's decisions, the primary purpose being to achieve the required returns in an appropriately risk-managed way to pay pensions when they become due. AAs also have a duty to scheme employers to invest competently.

12.3.2 Political preferences, whether local or national, should not take precedence over what is required under the fiduciary duty. This makes Pensions Committees different from other local government committees that are dealing with service provision, and which have to make political choices about the prioritisation of scarce public resources. Administering an LGPS fund is not best understood as a "local government function" instead Pensions Committees operate in a quasi-trustee role.

12.3.3 It is also important that those charged with management of an LGPS fund understand the decision-making function they have and maintain an appropriate level of knowledge and skills, as underpinned by legislation, legal opinions and guidance to exercise their duties. The stability and continuity of membership of Pensions Committee is therefore an important consideration.

12.3.4 The Pensions Committee may call upon the Local Pensions Board to seek assistance on matters to be discussed at the committee meeting. Where such assistance is sought, it must be considered as part of the decision-making process.

12.4 **Composition:**

To be determined each year by the Annual Meeting of Council and subject to the overall political balance calculation.

The Committee shall include co-opted members, being:
(i) an elected Member of Knowsley Council
(ii) an elected Member of Liverpool City Council
(iii) an elected Member of St Helens Council
(iv) an elected Member of Sefton Council
(v) an appointed person.

12.5 **Terms of Reference**

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The Pensions Committee is responsible for exercise on behalf of the Council all of the powers and duties of the Council in relation to its functions as Administering Authority of the Merseyside Pension Fund under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and Pension Schemes Act 2026 and all associated legislation including without limitation relevant secondary legislation and statutory guidance.

In particular, the Committee is charged by full Council:

(a) To adhere to the principles set out in the Statutory Guidance and Codes of Practice issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Scheme Advisory Board and the Pensions Regulator and undertake its duties in compliance with the obligations imposed on it as Scheme Manager.

(b) To approve the investment strategy and asset allocation of the Fund after taking into account the advice received from the Fund's Investment Management Company ("Northern LGPS Ltd") which must be consistent with the Council's fiduciary duty and the Fund's responsibility to ensure sustainable investment returns which meet present and future pensions liabilities.

(c) To make and terminate the appointments of the professional advisers to the Fund and agree the basis of their commission and remuneration.

(d) To receive actuarial valuations of the Fund and determine the level of employers' contributions necessary to meet present and future funding requirements.

(e) To monitor the Local Government Pension Scheme regulations and their day to day administration and to be responsible for all policy decisions relating to the administration of the scheme.

(f) To consider views expressed by employing organisations on matters relating to the scheme.

(g) To determine the terms of reference of, and representation on, any sub-committees established to support the activities of the Committee and any forums of Members convened to review and report to the Committee the performance of the Fund's investments and asset allocation, its responsible investment policy, and the Fund's management of governance and risk.

(h) To award contracts for goods and services relating to the Fund in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules after taking into account the recommendations of officers and external professional advisers (where appropriate).

(i) To oversee the Fund's business planning process including approval of the Fund's annual budget and to receive regular reporting on its management.

(j) To monitor investment activity and the performance of the Fund's assets and liabilities.

(k) To review and adopt the statutory policies of the Fund in accordance with the Fund's policy framework.

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(l) To determine the Fund's training strategy and to ensure members of the Committee undertake training in line with statutory guidance and the adopted training policy.

(m) To take account of recommendations from the Local Pension Board (the Board) and receive an annual review of the Board's activities.

(n) To keep under review and exercise the Fund's governance arrangements in respect of the Fund's investment management company (Northern LGPS Ltd).

(o) To ensure an effective framework of internal controls across the Fund's operational and financial risk management and to determine the Fund's governance and conflict of interest policies.

(p) To exercise all the powers and duties of the Council as shareholder in Northern LGPS Ltd including without limitation entering into shareholder and investment management agreements with the company.

(q) To arrange triennial independent governance reviews.

(r) To recommend to the Council's Director of Finance the appointment of members to the Local Pension Board.

(s) To be consulted by the LGPS senior officer as to the appointment of a duly qualified independent person to advise the Committee and support the LGPS senior officer Officer.

(t) To be consulted by the Council's Head of Paid Service regarding the appointment of a person to carry out the powers and duties of the LGPS senior officer post established by statute.

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12.6 **Joint Governance Committee of the Northern Local Government Pension Scheme Investment Pool**

12.6.1 Establishment

(a) Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and City of Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council (together referred to as the "Pooling Partners" and individually as a "Pooling Partner") are all councils responsible for the administration of local government pensions within their areas as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 and the Superannuation Act 1972.

(b) The Pooling Partners are each required by Regulation 7(1) of the Investment Regulations to have formulated an investment strategy in accordance with Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government as issued from time to time.

(c) Regulation 7(2)(d) of the Investment Regulations requires in particular that each LGPS administering authority sets outs its "approach to pooling investments, including the use of collective investment vehicles and shared services" in its investment strategy statement.

(d) Having regard to their obligations under the Investment Regulations, the Pooling Partners have therefore agreed to establish and participate in a formal joint committee, known as the "Northern LGPS Joint Governance Committee", pursuant to section 101 and section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. (Approved at Council 14th October 2019)

12.6.2 Composition

The membership of the Joint Governance Committee shall consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of each of the Pooling Partners' pension committees or such alternative persons nominated by the Pooling Partners.

12.6.3 Joint Governance Committee Terms of Reference

Scope

(a) Subject to the terms of the Agreement, the Joint Governance Committee shall undertake those matters which are not Matters Reserved to the Pooling Partners as set out in Schedule 1.

Purpose

(b) The primary purposes of the Joint Committee are to:

(i) exercise oversight over the investment performance of the Pooling Partners' Funds;

(ii) deliver the Shared Objectives;

(iii) agree on any recommended changes to the Shared Objectives from time to time to refer to the Pooling Partners; and

(iv) report to the Pooling Partners quarterly (and at any other time when the Joint Governance Committee considers it to be necessary) on the matters within their remit below.

Remit

(c) Monitoring and benchmarking performance against key performance indicators and costs and reporting back to the Pooling Partners.

(d) Making recommendations on the appointment, replacement or termination of the Pool Custodian to the Pooling Partners

(e) Oversight of responsible investment activities (including ethical, social and governance matters and voting rights) of the Pooling Partners and making recommendations to the Pooling Partners as to any changes.

(f) Engagement with the Pooling Partners to help drive efficiencies in investment management, research or administration.

(g) Nominating representatives to national structures as appropriate (for example any LGPS cross-pool forum or national infrastructure board).

(h) Overseeing staffing requirements of the Northern LGPS investment vehicles.

(i) Delegation of tasks to the Officer Working Group, including the selection of external investment managers, preparation of reports and draft documents and the responding to Government or other consultations].

(j) Oversight of Northern LGPS investment vehicles and reviewing opportunities for collaborative working with other investors (including other LGPS pools).

(k) Appointing and replacing service providers and advisers to the Joint Governance Committee.

(l) Liaison with Pension Boards as appropriate in line with CIPFA Guidance, and Statutory Guidance.

(m) Reporting on the performance of the Northern LGPS, its costs and other activities, but not limited to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Scheme Advisory Board and the general public.

(n) Applying any processes or policies, for example in relation to conflicts on interest that are assigned to the Joint Governance Committee under this Agreement by the Pooling Partners.

(o) Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the Northern LGPS policies and procedures and initiating reviews of these with the Host Council where required.

(p) Seeking advice from officers and professional advisers where necessary.

(q) Overseeing any shared costs of the Joint Governance Committee.

13 **HEALTH AND WELL BEING BOARD**

13.1 **Establishment:**

A Health and Well Being Board is a Committee of the Council established under s.102 of the Local Government Act 1972 as an ordinary committee but amended pursuant to 194 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (Establishment of Health and Wellbeing Boards) and The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

As a result, the voting members of the Board must as a minimum consist of:

(a) at least one councillor of the local authority;

(b) the Director of Care and Health for the local authority;

(c) the Director of Children's, Families and Education for the local authority;

(d) the director of public health for the local authority;

(e) a representative of the Local Healthwatch organisation for the area of the local authority;

(f) a representative of each relevant clinical commissioning group; and

(g) such other persons, or representatives of such other persons, as the local authority thinks appropriate.

The political requirements set out in sections 15, 16 and Schedule 1 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 do not apply to the membership of the Board.

13.2 **Composition:**

The Wirral Health and Well Being Board will consist of the following

(a) **Core Membership**

(i) Five (5) elected Members of Wirral Borough Council, being the

(1) Leader (or Deputy Leader) of the Council;

(2) The Chair (or Vice Chair) of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee;

(3) The Chair (or Vice Chair) of the Children, Young People and Education Committee; and

(4) The leaders (or nominee) of the second and third largest Political Groups;

(ii) the Chief Executive of Wirral Borough Council;

(iii) the Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning at Wirral Borough Council

(iv) the Director of Children, Family and Education at Wirral Borough Council;

(v) Place Director for Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board; and

(vi) A representative of HealthWatch

(b) **Appointed Membership**

(i) A senior officer of Wirral Borough Council responsible for housing policy and services;

(ii) Chief Executive, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust;

(iii) Chief Executive, Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust;

(iv) Chief Executive, Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust;

(v) Chairs from the NHS Foundation Trusts in Wirral;

(vi) Representative from Merseyside Police;

(vii) Representative from Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service; and

(viii) Representative from Jobcentre Plus

(c) **Co-options and engagement**

Representatives of other bodies may be invited to participate in Board discussions, or co-opted, to support effective decision-making. Such representatives should be invited bearing in mind the principles of fairness, equality and transparency.

13.3 **Terms of Reference**

The principal role of the Health and Wellbeing Board is to discharge functions pursuant to sections 195 and 196 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will not be responsible for directly commissioning services, but will provide oversight, strategic direction and coordination of the following activities:

(a) To develop a shared understanding of the needs of the local community through the development of an agreed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

(b) To seek to meet those needs through leading on the ongoing development of a Health & Wellbeing Strategy

(c) To provide a local governance structure for local planning and accountability of health and wellbeing related outcomes

(d) To work with HealthWatch in Wirral to ensure appropriate engagement and involvement within existing patient and service user involvement groups takes place

(e) To drive a collaborative approach to commissioning of improved health and care services which improve the health and wellbeing of local people

(f) To consider and take advantage of opportunities to more closely integrate health and social care services in commissioning and provision

(g) To review the financial and organisational implications of joint and integrated working across health and social care services, ensuring that performance and quality standards of health and social care services are met, and represent value for money across the whole system

(h) To establish a key forum for local democratic accountability relating to commissioning against agreed health outcomes

(i) To develop and update the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)

(j) To ensure the Better Care Fund plan is monitored regarding its progress and performance and ensure the health and social care partners effectively plan regarding the implications of this work.

13.4 **Chairing the Board**

The Board will be chaired by the Leader of the Council (or another elected member as their nominee).

14 **MERSEYSIDE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

14.1 **Establishment:**

14.1.1 The Merseyside Police and Crime Panel is a joint committee of the local authorities (the 'Authorities') which the Merseyside Police area covers, being
a) Knowsley Borough Council;
b) Liverpool City Council;
c) St. Helens Borough Council;
d) Sefton Borough Council; and
e) Wirral Borough Council;

14.1.2 The Authorities are required to establish and maintain the police and crime panel for the police area, and make the panel arrangements as required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

14.2. **Functions of the Panel**

14.2.1 The overarching role of the Panel is to scrutinise the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in the discharge of the PCC's functions in order to support the effective exercise of those functions and to make reports or recommendations to the PCC as appropriate.

14.2.2 In specific terms the Panel's role will involve the duties/ functions set out in sections 2.3 to 2.12 below.

14.2.3 The Panel is a statutory consultee on the development of the **PCC's Police and Crime Plan** and must:
(a) review the draft Police and Crime Plan (or a variation to it); and
(b) make a report and/or make recommendations on the draft Plan (or a variation to it) to the PCC.

14.2.4 The Panel must review the **Annual Report** of the PCC, and for that purpose will:
(a) question the PCC on the Annual Report at a public meeting of the Panel;
(b) make a report and/or recommendations on the Annual Report to the PCC.

14.2.5 The Panel must hold **confirmation hearings in respect of proposed senior appointments** made by the PCC. This includes the posts of the PCC's Chief Executive; the PCC's Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with the requirements set out in Schedule 1 of the Act. At a hearing, the Panel will review a proposed appointment and make a report and recommendation to the PCC on it.

14.2.6 The Panel must hold a **confirmation hearing in respect of the appointment of the Chief Constable** by the PCC. At a hearing, the Panel will review a proposed appointment and make a report and recommendation to the PCC on it. The Panel also has the right of veto for the appointment of this post in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Act.

14.2.7 The Panel must review the **precept** proposed by the PCC in accordance with the requirements set out in Schedule 5 of the Act, and will have a right of veto in respect of the precept in accordance with the Act.

14.2.8 A right of veto will require that at least two-thirds of the persons who are Members of the Panel at the time when the decision is made vote in favour of making that decision.

14.2.9 The Panel must hold a **scrutiny hearing in respect of the proposed removal of the Chief Constable** by the PCC before it must make a recommendation to the PCC on the proposed removal in accordance with Schedule 8 to the Act. Before making a recommendation to the PCC, the Panel may also consult the Chief Inspector of Constabulary. At a scrutiny hearing, held in private, the Panel may consider representations from the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable on the PCC's proposal.

14.2.10 The Panel has the power to **appoint an Acting PCC** where the incumbent PCC is incapacitated, resigns or is disqualified.

14.2.11 The Panel may **suspend the PCC** if he/she is charged with an offence carrying a maximum term of imprisonment exceeding two years.

14.2.12 The Panel is obliged to put in place **arrangements for recording and dealing with conduct matters relating to the PCC and Deputy PCC**, including reference, where appropriate, to the Independent Police Complaints Commission or informal resolution of matters at the local level.

14.3. **Operating Arrangements**

14.3.1 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council acts as the Host Authority and arrange for the necessary officer support in doing so. In this respect Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council will be provide the Secretariat.

14.3.2 The Panel initially shall be made up of 10 councillors and 2 independent co-opted members. Further consideration may be given by the Panel to the addition of any further co-opted members, if it is deemed that this would assist the Panel in carrying out its duties.

14.4. **Council Membership**

14.4.1 All district councillors, and where appropriate elected mayors, on Merseyside will be eligible to be nominated as members of the Police and Crime Panel.

14.4.2 Under the provisions of the Act, each of the Authorities is entitled to nominate one elected member to serve on the Panel in accordance with these Panel Arrangements. The Act requires further extra places for appointed members to be allocated between the Authorities to make up the required total of 10 appointed members on the Panel.

14.4.3 In order to meet the geographical aspect of the Balanced Appointment Objective the 5 extra places for elected members on the Panel will be allocated between the five Authorities as follows to produce a total membership which is split in accordance with the Authorities' respective population sizes:

Authority	Minimum Allocation	Extra Members	**Total**
Knowsley	1	-	1
Liverpool	1	2	3
St. Helens	1	1	2
Sefton	1	1	2
Wirral	1	1	2

14.4.4 In order to comply with the political aspect of the "balanced appointment objective", the political balance on the Panel during 2020/ 2021, will reflect the political balance across Merseyside.

14.4.5 The allocation of elected member places on the Panel will be reviewed on an annual basis, ordinarily in the period following the date of the municipal elections. In years where municipal elections do not take place, the review will need to have taken place by 15 May in that year.

14.4.6 Taking into account the outcome of such a review, Elected Members will be appointed by their respective Authorities in accordance with the constitutional procedures applicable in those Authorities. In any event, each Authority will ordinarily be expected to appoint their representatives no later than 31 May in each year.

14.4.7 The term of office of each Authority representative appointed shall be a period of 1 year or until 31 May of the following year, whichever is the earlier. This term of office is however subject to the appointed Member remaining as an Elected Member during the term of office. In the event of a Panel Member ceasing to be an elected member during the course of their term of office as a Panel Member, their entitlement to serve on the Panel will also cease at that point.

14.5. **Panel Arrangements**

14.5.1 Panel arrangements are arrangements for the establishment and maintenance of a police and crime panel. All of the Authorities must agree to the making or modification of the panel arrangements. The current panel arrangements may be obtained from the Host Authority or upon request and cover the additional matters of:

- Elected Members – Resignation or Removal from the Panel
- Independent Co-opted Members
- Independent Co-opted Members - Resignation and removal from the Panel
- Financial Arrangements
- Promotion and Support of the Panel
- Validity of Proceedings
- Review and Amendment of Panel Arrangements

15 **CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP**

15.1 **Establishment:**

15.1.1 The Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Partnership (known as the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership) is a joint committee of the local authorities (the 'Authorities') which the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB covers as required by the insertion of a new Section 116ZA to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, being

a) Cheshire East Council
b) Cheshire West and Chester Council
c) Knowsley Borough Council;
d) Liverpool City Council;
e) St. Helens Borough Council;
f) Sefton Borough Council; and
g) Wirral Borough Council;

15.1.2 Its membership must have as a minimum one member appointed by the ICB, but will also encompasses the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE), NHS organisations and others, to be agreed by the Partnership.

15.1.3 It is a statutory joint committee that forms part of the overall structure of the Integrated Care System as required by the Health & Care Act 2022.

15.1.4 The Partnership has not been established under S65Z6 or S75 arrangements between the NHS and Local Authority member organisations of the HCP, and as such does not have the authority as a Committee to exercise joint functions or hold or make decisions on a pooled budget arrangements.

15.2. **Functions of the Panel**

15.2.1 The Cheshire and Merseyside HCP is a broad alliance of organisations and representatives concerned with improving the care, health and wellbeing of the population, jointly convened by local authorities and the NHS as equal partners in order to facilitate joint action to improve health and care outcomes and experiences, influence the wider determinants of health, and plan and deliver improved integrated health and care.

15.2.2 Its primary purpose will be to act in the best interests of residents across Cheshire & Merseyside, rather than representing the interests of any individual organisation.

15.2.3 The role and purpose of the HCP does not duplicate that of the nine Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Wellbeing Boards. The HCP will work in conjunction where appropriate to help achieve common objectives and aims to benefit local populations.

15.2.4 The HCP provides the opportunity for a Cheshire & Merseyside forum to support and enhance work programmes to improve population health outcomes and reduce health inequalities by addressing complex, long term issues which need an integrated approach across Cheshire & Merseyside.

15.2.5 The HCP, as an Integrated Care Partnership, has a statutory responsibility to prepare, approve and publish an Integrated Care Strategy for the Cheshire and Merseyside ICS, setting out how the assessed needs in relation to Cheshire & Merseyside are to be met by the exercise of functions of:

- the Integrated Care Board
- NHS England
- the nine local authorities whose areas coincide with the ICB area

15.2.6 In preparing this strategy the HCP must involve:

- the Local Healthwatch organisations whose areas coincide with or fall wholly or partly within its area
- the people who live and work in Cheshire & Merseyside

15.2.7 The strategy will have due regard to and respond to the Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments of each of the nine local authority areas.

15.3 **Membership**

15.3.1 Membership of the Health and Care Partnership (as an Integrated Care Partnership) is set out in legislation and must have as a minimum:

- one member appointed by the Integrated Care Board
- one member appointed by each of the nine local authorities.

Legislation also allows for members to be appointed by the HCP itself.

15.3.2 In all cases, the membership will be renewable on an annual basis. Each participant organisation or body will be expected to have formally nominated or confirmed their nominated member by 1st August of each year. Changes in membership during the year are allowed and must be notified to the HCP promptly and before attendance at the next meeting.

15.3.3 Where members are not available to attend meetings, a substitute nominated by organisation may attend on their behalf.

15.3.4 The Chair of the HCP will be drawn from one of the nominated HCP members from the nine local authorities. The Chair will be appointed on an annual basis at the first meeting of the year (in September) by the local authority members of the HCP present at the meeting. Individuals wanting to be considered for the Chair role will need to be nominated and seconded by one other local authority member of the Board and agreed by way of a majority vote.

15.3.5 The Chair of the HCP will discuss attendance with any member who fails to attend three consecutive HCP Meetings. The Chair of the HCP will refer any ongoing concerns regarding non-attendance of a member to their organisation with a recommendation that consideration be given to whether it is appropriate for the individual to continue as a member of the HCP.

Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers: Director of Pensions.

The following functions, particular to the Pension Fund, are delegated to the Director of Pensions pursuant to Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and by the Executive under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 2000.

1.To Undertake all day to day administration of the Merseyside Pension Fund within the policy laid down by the Pensions Committee including without limitation the authorisation of admission agreements with contractor admission bodies pursuant to Best Value arrangements, as required by the Local Government Pensions Scheme Regulations and to enter into contracts on behalf of the Fund in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

2.To terminate a contract entered into on behalf of the Fund and enter into any consequential arrangements pending a decision on the award of a new contract.

3. To recommend to the Director of Finance the appointment of members of the Local Pension Board and for the Director of Pensions ,in his capacity as the senior LGPS officer to appoint, after consultation with the Pensions Committee, a duly qualified independent person as adviser to the Pensions Committee.

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4. To participate in the activities of the Fund's investment management company Northern LGPS Limited.

5. To carry out the duties of the senior LGPS officer post established by statute.

6. To advise the Pensions Committee on all matters within the Committee's Terms of Reference.

The Director of Pensions may authorise officers in his department to exercise on his behalf, functions delegated to him. Any decisions taken under this authority shall remain the responsibility of the Director of Pensions and must be taken in his name, and he shall remain accountable and responsible for such decisions

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WIRRAL

PENSIONS COMMITTEE

MONDAY 22 JUNE 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**PENSIONS COMMITTEE: REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE**
REPORT OF:	**DIRECTOR OF PENSIONS**

REPORT SUMMARY

The Pension Schemes Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and gives effect to changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, in particular, the LGPS (Pooling, management and investment of funds) Regulations and the LGPS (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2026.

On 21 May 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the government's response to the technical consultation. The legislative changes will require revisions to the Pensions Committee's terms of reference and to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers with regard to the Director of Pensions.

This matter has no Ward implications

This matter is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Pensions Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed changes to its terms of reference and to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions and refers the changes to the Constitution and Standards Committee for review and approval at Full Council to ensure that Wirral Council is compliant with the requirements of the relevant legislation and guidance when it comes into effect on 30 June 2026;

2. authorises the Director of Pensions to undertake a recruitment exercise to appoint an Independent Person for Merseyside Pension fund in accordance with the specification set out in the regulations and guidance.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 The Pension Schemes Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and gives effect to changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, in particular, the LGPS (Pooling, management and investment of funds) Regulations and the LGPS (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2026. These Regulations require fundamental changes to the governance and management of Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) assets and it is essential that necessary changes to the constitution of Wirral Council are implemented to ensure that Wirral Council and Pensions Committee is compliant with the requirements of the relevant legislation and guidance when it comes into effect.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 No other suitable options are available. In view of the materiality of the matters under consideration, it is imperative that Pensions Committee is informed of legislative changes and their implications for Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) and Wirral Council as its administering authority.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Pooling of assets in the LGPS in England and Wales commenced in 2015 with the publication of criteria and guidance on asset pooling which followed extensive consultation with the sector on other options for increasing scale and reducing investment costs. There were eight operational pools which covered a range of pooling models, which has recently reduced to six with the ACCESS and Brunel pools being wound-up, and their partner funds transferring their assets to other pools.

3.2 A report to this Committee in March 2026 set out the proposals of the Fit for the Future consultation, and the implications of the draft

On 26 November 2025 (MHCLG) launched a technical consultation seeking views on two draft statutory instruments (links below) and whether these deliver effectively the policy proposals set out in the government's response to the earlier 'Fit for the Future' consultation.

- the 'Local Government Pension Scheme (Pooling, Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2026'
- the 'Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2026'

3.3 The consultation closed on 2 January 2026.

3.4 At MHCLG's request, on 8 December 2025, the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board Secretariat distributed to all 86 administering authorities (AAs) in England and Wales three sets of draft statutory guidance accompanying the revised regulations issued for consultation on 26 November. MHCLG's response to the consultation was issued on 21 May 2026 with a limited number of minor changes following feedback from LGPS funds and pools.

3.5 The implications of these regulations and guidance were the subject of a report to this Committee on 17 March 2026 and discussed 14 April at a Governance and Risk Working Party.

3.5 The principal change is that the Merseyside, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire Local Government Pension Funds will have to set up an investment management company (Northern LGPS Ltd) authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority which will manage on behalf of the three Funds their investments in accordance with the statutory requirements and guidance.

3.6 Some of the other material changes include requiring Wirral Council to:

- appoint a senior LGPS officer who has a senior responsibility across all pension functions of the authority;
- appoint an independent person to support the pensions committee, the senior LGPS officer and the local pension board;
- commission independent governance reviews of the pension fund;
- ensure minimum standards of knowledge and understanding for relevant persons (which includes elected Members).

3.7 The knowledge and understanding implications are the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

3.8 Following consideration and approval of the changes to the terms of reference by Pensions Committee, the changes will be considered by the Local Pension Board at its meeting on 24 June 2026. It is proposed that the matter is then referred to the Constitution and Standards Committee before submission to Full Council.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The costs of making the necessary governance changes are not expected to be material relative to the costs of establishing the Pool company. The costs are not yet known but will include the appointment of the Independent Person, the commissioning of Independent Governance reviews and support around the knowledge and understanding requirements.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Pension Schemes Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and gives effect to changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, in particular, the LGPS (Pooling, management and investment of funds) Regulations and the LGPS (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2026. These Regulations require fundamental changes to the governance and management of Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) assets.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The implications of making the necessary governance changes are not yet known but will include the appointment of the Independent Person, the commissioning of Independent Governance reviews and support around the knowledge and

understanding requirements in respect of elected members, the local pension board and officers.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Pooling has resulted in fundamental changes to oversight and management of LGPS assets. It is essential that Pensions Committee exercises its governance responsibilities in accordance with the Council's constitution. As a LGPS administering authority, Wirral Metropolitan District Council ('WBC') has a fiduciary duty to ensure that it acts in the best interests of MPF members and employers. The proposals set out in this report seek to implement satisfactory oversight of MPF's investment management arrangements within the confines of Government's expected legislative changes.

7.2 Officers at the three partner funds are heavily involved in the project programme to deliver the Pool company to the demanding timelines set out by government and this may be detrimental to maintaining day to day operations at the Fund.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Officer are engaging regularly with officials from MHCLG and Treasury who are following progress closely.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report. The proposed interventions affect the investment of assets by LGPS administering authorities. These authorities are all public sector organisations, so no impact assessment is required. Local Government Pension Scheme (England and Wales): Fit for the future - GOV.UK

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environment and climate implications arising from this report. MPF has a Responsible Investment policy which explicitly addresses environment and climate implications as potentially financially material to the long-term performance of investments.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None arising directly from this report. One objective of the Pension Reforms is to encourage investment into the localities of pension funds and their administering authorities.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Peter Wallach**
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Revised terms of reference
Appendix 2 Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Pension Scheme (England and Wales): Fit for the future - GOV.UK
Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales: Fit for the Future - technical consultation - GOV.UK
The Local Government Pension Scheme (Pooling, Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2026
The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2026

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Pensions Committee in accordance with Section (a) of its Terms of Reference:

(a) To be responsible for the overall investment policy, strategy and principles of the Fund and its overall performance.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Pensions Committee	18 March 2026

MINUTE EXTRACT

PENSIONS COMMITTEE 22 JUNE 2026

10 PENSIONS COMMITTEE: REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Director of Pensions reported that the Pension Schemes Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026 and gave effect to changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, in particular, the LGPS (pooling, management and investment of funds) Regulations and the LGPS (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2026.

On 21 May 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the government's response to the technical consultation. The legislative changes would require revisions to the Pensions Committee's terms of reference and to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers with regard to the Director of Pensions.

Members highlighted an error in the formatting, to which the Director of Pensions assured the Committee that the error would be corrected prior to referral to Constitution and Standards Committee.

Resolved – That:

1. The proposed changes to its terms of reference and to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions be approved and the changes be referred to the Constitution and Standards Committee for review and approval at Full Council to ensure that Wirral Council is compliant with the requirements of the relevant legislation and guidance when it comes into effect on 30 June 2026; and

2. The Director of Pensions be authorised to undertake a recruitment exercise to appoint an Independent Person for Merseyside Pension fund in accordance with the specification set out in the regulations and guidance.

Planning Scheme of Management

1. Reference to Regulations in this document is a reference to the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

2. This Planning Scheme of Management allows the Assistant Director Chief Planner to discharge their responsibilities under the Planning Scheme of Delegation in the Constitution, and for the purposes of Regulation 3, 4 and 5 of the Regulations to produce a document that clearly sets out:

   (a) the member of the Councill who acts as the Nominated Member;
   (b) one or more members of the Council who act as a substitute for the Nominated Member;
   (c) the officer of the Council who acts as the Nominated Officer;
   (d) one or more officers of the Council who act as a substitute for the Nominated Officer
   (e) the process for consideration and referral of a Schedule 2 application to Planning Committee or Strategic Applications Sub-Committee

3. The document must also set out:

   - the officer(s) of the Council who have delegated power to determine a Schedule 1 planning application (Regulation 4);
   - the officer(s) of the Council who have delegated powers to determine a Schedule 2 planning application (Regulation 5);
   - the officer(s) of the Council who have delegated powers to determine an Own-Interest Application (Regulation 6); and
   - the officer(s) of the Council who have delegated powers under the Constitution to determine any other planning matter.

4. This document sets out the rules within the Regulations and provides additional advice on the use of delegated powers; both those powers derived from the Regulations and the powers delegated to the Assistant Director Chief Planner in the Council's Constitution.

2. Nominated Members

1. Pursuant to Regulation 3(1)(a) and 3(2)(a) the Nominated Member for the purposes of Regulations 5 and 6 is the Chair of Planning Committee.

2. Pursuant to Regulation 3(2)(b), where the Nominated Member is unavailable for whatever reason, the substitute Nominated Member is the Vice Chair of Planning Committee.

3. Nominated Officers

1. Pursuant to Regulation 3(1)(b) and 3(2)(a) the Nominated Officer for the purposes of Regulations 5 and 6 is the Assistant Director Chief Planner.

2. Pursuant to Regulation 3(2)(b), where the Nominated Officer is unavailable for whatever reason, the substitute Nominated Officer is the Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager.

4. Types of application

1. Within this scheme of management, the following terms have the following meaning;

   (i) Schedule 1 Application means any application that is of a kind specified in Schedule 1 to the Regulations, is not a Schedule 2 application and is not an own interest application
   (ii) Schedule 2 application means an application that is specified in schedule 2 to the Regulations and is not an own interest application
   (iii) Own Interest Application means an application to the local planning authority that is either a Schedule 1 Application or Schedule 2 Application, but it is made by or on behalf of that authority, a member of that authority or an officer of that authority or it is the view of the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member that the Council, member or officer has an interest in the application.
   (iv) Triage Application means a Schedule 2 application that has been triaged in accordance with this planning scheme of management and passed the triage test.
   (v) Residual Application means a Schedule 2 application that has been considered by the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member for referral to Committee but has not passed the Gateway test.
   (vi) The Gateway Test means a Schedule 2 application that raises one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area or one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations

2. A Schedule 1 Application must be delegated to the relevant officer and cannot be determined by Committee unless it is an Own Interest Application.

3. All Schedule 2 Applications will be identified, any application which is;

   (i) a planning application for development (including s.73 applications) that is compliant with the Development Plan and/or NPPF;
   (ii) an application for listed building consent or variation or discharge of conditions on a listed building consent;
   (iii) an application for consent under a Tree Preservation Order;
   (iv) an application for express consent to display an advertisement; or

(iv) a request or application to modify or discharge a S.106 agreement (connected with a Schedule 2 application)

will be a Triage Application having passed the triage test.

4. A Triage Application that has passed the triage test will be delegated to the relevant officer and not determined by Committee unless any of the following circumstances apply-

   (i) a written call-in request from any Elected Member has, prior to the last date for comment as published on an application for either their Ward or a Ward which would be substantially affected by the proposals, is received by the Chief Planning Officer and case officer, setting out their reasons why the requirements of the Gateway Test are met in relation to that application, or;
   (ii) 15 individual Objections to the application are received from members of the public during the designated public consultation period, or;
   (iii) one or more petitions of objection totalling 25 or more individual signatories from members of the public are received during the designated public consultation period, or;
   (iv) a referral of an application to the gateway test by the Assistant Director Chief Planner.

   in which case the application will be considered by the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member for referral to Committee as it is considered that this type of application will be potentially likely to meet the Gateway Test.

5. Any applications that fail the triage test (ie a planning application for development that does not comply with the Development Plan and/or NPPF) will be considered by the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer against the Gateway Test for referral for determination by Committee, unless officers are minded to recommend refusal of the application in which case it will be treated as a Residual Application.

6. Any applications that fall to be considered by the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer will be considered against the Gateway Test and will have regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with regulation 5 of the Regulations. Any application that does not pass the Gateway Test will be a Residual Application.

7. A Residual Application will be delegated to the relevant officer and not determined by Committee.

8. A Schedule 2 Application that the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member consider passes the Gateway Test will be determined by the Planning Committee or the Strategic Applications Sub-Committee.

   The Strategic Applications Sub Committee shall determine all Schedule 2 applications that pass the Gateway Test that comprise

(i) larger-scale major developments which are residential developments of 200 houses or more, or where the number of dwellings is not specified a site area of 4 hectares or more, and non-residential developments of 10,000 square metres or more or where the site area is 2 hectares or more; or,
(ii) significant Own Interest Applications by the Council to develop any land owned by the Council, or for development of any land by the Council or by the Council jointly with any other person

and the Planning Committee will determine all other applications, including all other Own Interest Applications.

9. Own Interest Applications will be considered by the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member in accordance with the procedure set out below.

5. Sub-Delegation

1. The Regulations and the Constitution provide that different officers can be nominated for different purposes with respect to the determination of planning applications and other planning matters.

2. The role of Nominated Member and Nominated Officer is to decide whether a Schedule 2 application that fails the triage test or an Own-Interest Application is determined by Committee.

2. The Assistant Director Chief Planner has sub-delegated the task of determining the following planning application categories to the following officers of the Council.

Schedule 1 Applications

3. Applications that must be determined by the relevant officer in accordance with regulation 4 of the Regulations.

Application category	Service Head	Section Head	Other Named Posts
All Schedule 1 applications	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Principal and Senior Planning Officers.

Schedule 2 Triaged Applications

4. Triaged Applications that are to be determined by the relevant officers.

Application category	Service Head	Section Head	Other Named Posts
All Schedule 2 Triage Applications	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Principal and Senior Planners

Schedule 2 Residual Applications

5. Residual Applications that are to be determined by the relevant officers.

Application category	Service Head	Section Head	Other Named Posts
All Schedule 2 Residual Applications	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Principal and Senior Planners

Own-Interest Applications

6. Own Interest Applications that are to be determined by the relevant officers

Application category	Service Head	Section Head	Other Named Posts
Own-interest applications	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Principal and Senior Planners

Other Planning Matters

7. The Constitution delegates all planning matters to the Assistant Director Chief Planner, save for those matters that must be determined by Full Council, the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee or Planning Committee and Strategic Applications Sub Committee. The Assistant Director Chief Planner has sub-delegated the task of determining the following planning matters to the following officers of the LPA.

Planning Matter	Service Head	Section Head	Other Named Posts

i.to take enforcement action on all matters relating to the issue, modification, service and withdrawal of Enforcement Notices, Listed Building Enforcement Notices, Planning Contravention Notices, Breach of Condition Notices, Discontinuance Orders, Stop Notices and Temporary Stop Notices, and to take direct action in respect of any breach of planning control;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Principal and Senior Planners
ii. To require owners to carry out proper maintenance of land where its condition detracts from the amenity of the immediate surrounding area, including the service of appropriate statutory notices under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Principal and Senior Planners
iii. To serve planning contravention notices and to hold discussions as a result of the “time and place” procedure under Section 171(C) of the Town and Country Planning Act;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
iv. To make Tree Preservation Orders under section 198 and section 201 of the Town and Country Planning Act and to subsequently confirm Tree Preservation Orders, except where five or more objections have been received, in which case the matter shall be determined by Planning Committee;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Tree Preservation Officer Assistant Tree Preservation Officer
v. To require replanting of trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders as is considered necessary;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Tree Preservation Officer Assistant Tree Preservation Officer
vi. To issue screening opinions and scoping opinions (under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	

vii. To authorise entry on to land under Sections 196 214(b) and 324 of the Act and under Section 88 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
viii. To consider Conservation area protection notifications under Section 211 of the Act;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	Tree Preservation Officer Assistant Tree Preservation Officer
ix. To present and defend the Council's case in any appeal made against a planning decision including appeals against non-determination and enforcement appeals;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	All Planners
x. To make changes to conditions approved at Committee (in the light of changing circumstances between the meeting and the issue of the decision) provided this is in line with the principles of the Committee's decision;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xi. To issue Enforcement Warning Notices pursuant to Section 172ZA of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xii. To exercise all the powers and duties of the Council arising under the provisions of the Hedgerows Regulations 1997;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xiii. To respond to consultations from neighbouring local planning authorities on planning applications;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	

xiv. To respond to all consultations on proposed changes to relevant legislation or national guidance;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xv. To exercise all the powers and duties under Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to consider and determine complaints about high hedges, to issue any remedial notices and to defend the Council's decision in any appeal made;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xvi. To determine the requirements for, and amend when necessary, the local validation list for planning applications;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager		
xvii. To exercise all the powers and duties of the Council arising under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 relating to listed buildings and conservation areas except those that are Schedule 1 Application or a Schedule 2 Application	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xviii. To exercise all powers and duties of the Council arising under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 except those that are Schedule 1 Application or a Schedule 2 Application	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xix. To exercise all the powers and duties of the Council arising under the provisions of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager	Development Management Team Leaders	
xx. To exercise all the functions of the Council in respect of applications for development consent for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects made to the Examining Authority arising under the provisions of the Planning Act 2008;	Senior Planning Manager and Development Management Manager		

8. With respect to a planning matter that is delegated to the Assistant Director Chief Planner but is not listed above, the Assistant Director Chief Planner can, at their discretion, sub-delegate the task of determining the matter to another officer.

6. Use Of Delegated Powers

1. When using delegated powers or referring a matter to committee for a determination, an officer of the Council must make sure that they take such decisions in the appropriate way and that they are recorded. This should be captured in the associated delegated or committee report with respective sections titled:

    - Reason for determining under delegated powers
    - Reason for referral to Committee

2. These reasons should be succinct but clear.

Schedule 1 Applications

3. These applications must always be determined under delegated powers and cannot be referred to committee for determination. The associated delegated report should therefore state:

    This is a Schedule 1 Application. By virtue of Regulation 4, it must be dealt with under delegated powers.

Schedule 2 Applications

Triaged Applications

4. The categories of application in Schedule 2 that have been identified as Triage Applications and should be determined under delegated powers. The associated delegated report should state:

    This is a Schedule 2 Application. By virtue of Regulation 5, it should be dealt with under delegated powers because the Gateway Test is not engaged.

Gateway Test Applications

5. If it is agreed to refer an application to Committee, that decision and the reasons for it should be set out succinctly and clearly in the associated committee report as follows:

    This is a Schedule 2 Application. By virtue of Regulation 5, it is being reported to Committee because the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer agree that it is necessary because [it raises one or

more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area and it raises one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

6. If the application is a Residual Application and remains a delegated decision, the associated delegated report should state:

   This is a Schedule 2 application. By virtue of Regulation 5, it is being dealt with under delegated powers because the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer do not agree that the Gateway Test is engaged because it does not raise any issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area and nor does it raise any significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

Process For Own-Interest Applications

7. The decision-making process for these applications should be one of ensuring openness and transparency. In deciding whether to refer to Planning Committee or Planning Applications Sub Committee, the Nominated Member and Officer should ensure that, because of the nature of the applicant, there is not a real (or reasonably perceived) risk of bias by determining the application under delegated powers and secondly that, because of the nature of the development, there is a good reason to refer it to Planning Committee or Planning Applications Sub Committee.

   Own-Interest Applications: Applicant Considerations

8. In this context, category (c) Linked Persons should normally be narrowed to only apply to:
   - a Senior Officer of the Council; or
   - an 'officer of the Local Planning Authority'
   - a member of the Council.

9. The first would be defined as Service Head level and above.

10. The second, would be defined as an officer within the Council who, in the opinion of the Assistant Director Chief Planner is closely involved in the day-to-day work of the Council's planning function.

11. It is reasonable to conclude that other officers of the Council would not be known to the planning service and therefore the risk of bias is not engaged. Such applications should be determined in the same way that any other application in that Schedule would be determined. The details of the Own-Interest applicant status should be recorded in the respective committee or delegated report with the following introduction:

    This is an Own-Interest Application because the applicant is an officer of the Council, but as they are not a senior officer nor closely involved in the day-to-day work of the Council's planning function it has not been

reported to committee for that reason. [This is a Schedule 1 Application. By virtue of Regulation 4, it must be dealt with under delegated powers.] [This is a Schedule 2 Application. By virtue of Regulation 5, it should be dealt with under delegated powers because the Gateway Test is not engaged.].

Own-Interest Applications: Development Considerations

12. For any Own Interest Application in determining whether there is a good reason to refer that application to Planning Committee or Planning Applications Sub Committee because of the nature of the development the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer will consider referral to and determination by Planning Committee or Planning Applications Sub Committee if one of the following criteria applies:

    - the proposal has been advertised under Article 15 of the DMPO because it does not accord with the provisions of the development plan; or
    - one or more material planning considerations are raised that have the potential to have a significant impact.

13. This allows the circumstances of each application to be assessed and if it is for a development that complies with policy and there is not considered to be a material planning objection, it can be dealt with under delegated powers, with the reason recoded in the delegated report as follows:

    This is an Own-Interest Application. By virtue of Regulation 5, it is not being reported to committee because it has not been advertised under Article 15 of the GMPO as a departure and nor is there considered to be a material planning objection.

14. Where either of these criteria applies, the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer must agree that it is necessary for the planning application to be referred to and determined by Planning Committee or Planning Applications Sub Committee and this should be recorded in the normal way in the associated committee report as follows:

    This is an Own-Interest Application. By virtue of Regulation 5, it is being reported to Committee because the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer agree that it is necessary because [it has been advertised under Article 15 of the GMPO as a departure] [and] [there is considered to be a material planning objection].

15. To ensure that these matters can be safely administered, and the risk of fraudulent objections is minimised, a material planning objection must have been made in writing in response to the publicity/advertisement/notification of the application, be from a person with an address within the LPA area and be received within the designated consultation period.

16. With these safeguards in place, such applications will be put to committee where that serves a legitimate purpose but can be dealt with under delegated

powers where committee involvement is not necessary as is determined by the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member.

17. Where a local planning authority is determining its own application for planning permission, it must not be determined by a committee, sub-committee or officer responsible for the management of the building or land to which the application relates. In addition to this restriction, where a planning application is made by or on behalf of a nominated officer or member or an entity owned or controlled (whether wholly or partly) by a member or officer (including jointly with another person), in the interests of propriety, they should not be involved in the decision on whether to refer it to committee or not.

Officer's Discretion To Use Delegated Powers

18. With respect to planning applications covered by the Regulations, officers do not have discretion to decide to report a matter to committee. Only the Nominated Member and Nominated Officer can jointly take that decision.

19. With respect to any other planning matter that is capable of being dealt with under delegated powers, an officer does have the ability, in their absolute discretion, to decide that it is not appropriate in the circumstances of a particular case to exercise those powers with respect to that planning matter and therefore report it to members (Full Council or Planning Committee or Strategic Applications Sub Committee as appropriate) for determination.

20. In both cases, that decision and the reasons for it should be set out succinctly and clearly in the associated committee report, as follows:

> *This is [describe the planning matter]. It is being reported to [Council] [Cabinet] [Committee] because the Assistant Director Chief Planner considers that it is necessary because […].*

21. The following categories of matters shall be determined by the Assistant Director Chief Planner in consultation with the Chair and Party spokespersons;
    (i) Recommendations not to take enforcement action relating to Priorities 1, 2, and 3 of the adopted Planning Enforcement Policy on the grounds of non-expediency,
    (ii) Any decision to revoke a Tree Preservation Order and not replace it,
    (iii) Any decision to inform the appellant and the Planning Inspectorate that the Council will not seek to defend the reason(s) for refusal at an appeal against a planning decision, in cases in which the advice of the Head of Legal is that the specific reasons are unreasonable and/or likely to undermine or weaken the Council's case, provided that any such action does not overturn the substantive decision of the Committee.

COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

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1. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1.1. Timing and business

In a year when there is an ordinary election of councillors, the annual meeting will take place within 21 days of the retirement of the outgoing councillors. In any other year, the annual meeting will take place on the second Monday in May, or such other day in the month of March, April or May that year as the Council may fix.

1.2 Part 1: The Ceremonial Meeting (Mayor Making)

The Meeting will:

(i) elect a person to preside if the Mayor is not present;

(ii) elect the Mayor;

(iii) elect the Deputy Mayor;

(iv) receive the retiring Mayor's report; and

(v) adjourn the meeting.

1.3 Part 2: The Business Meeting

The Meeting will:

(i) approve the minutes of the last meeting;

(ii) receive any announcements from the Mayor and/or the Head of Paid Service;

(iii) receive a report from the Returning Officer on the outcome of Borough Elections;

(iv) appoint to committees, in that the annual meeting will:

(1) appoint such committees as are required or the Council considers appropriate for the municipal year (noting that Council may decide at subsequent meetings to dissolve committees, alter their terms of reference or to appoint new committees);

(2) decide the size and terms of reference for those committees;

(3) decide the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with the rules on political balance;

(4) receive nominations of Members to serve on each committee;

(5) appoint to those committees (except where appointment to those bodies has been delegated by the Council);

(v) appoint:

(1) the Leader of the Council (Chair of Policy & Resources Committee);

(2) the Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chair of Policy & Resources Committee); and

(3) the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all other Council committees, at (iv)(1) above, other than those which the Council has decided should be appointed by the committee itself

(vi) approve a programme of ordinary meetings of the Council for the year;

(vii) appoint Members to panels, advisory committees, working parties and miscellaneous other bodies and appoint Members (and/or other individuals) to outside bodies and organisations, unless otherwise delegated; and

(viii) consider any business set out in the notice convening the meeting.

Unless otherwise determined by statute, the Mayor may vary the order of the agenda at his/her absolute discretion and may allocate or reallocate an appropriate time for the transaction of each item.

2. ORDINARY MEETINGS

Ordinary meetings of the Council will take place in accordance with a programme decided at the Council's annual meeting. Ordinary meetings will:

(i) elect a person to preside if the Mayor and Deputy-Mayor are not present;

(ii) approve the minutes of the last meeting;

(iii) receive any declarations of interest from Members;

(iv) receive any announcements from the Mayor, Leader of the Council or the Head of Paid Service (which, with the exception of the Mayor, will normally be limited to 5 minutes);

(v) receive questions from, and provide answers to, the public in relation to matters which in the opinion of the person presiding at the meeting are relevant to the business of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 10 below (limited to 30 minutes);

(vi) receive representations from electors of the Borough in relation to matters which in the opinion of the person presiding at the meeting are relevant to the business of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 11.1 below; (limited to 20 minutes);

(vii) receive petitions from Members or the public in accordance with Standing Order 11.2 below;

(viii) receive questions on notice from, and provide answers to, Members in accordance with Standing Order 12.2 below;

(ix) deal with any business from the last Council meeting;

(x) receive recommendations and reports from the Council's committees for consideration, including consideration of proposals from the Policy and Resources Committee in relation to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and receive questions and answers on any of those reports;

(xi) receive any reports from the Council's Committees for consideration and receive questions and answers on any of those reports;

(xii) receive reports about and receive questions and answers on decisions made by Committees since the last meeting of Council;
(limited to 45 minutes);

(xiii) receive any reports about and receive questions and answers on the business of joint arrangements and external organisations, including the Combined Authority;

(xiv) consider motions on notice; and

(xv) consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting.

3. EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS

3.1. Calling extraordinary meetings

Those listed below may request the proper officer to call Council meetings in addition to ordinary meetings:

(i) the Council by resolution;

(ii) the Mayor (or the Deputy Mayor if the Mayor is unable to act);

(iii) the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance (s.151) Officer in exercise of their statutory powers; or

(iv) any five members of the Council if they have signed a requisition presented to the Mayor and he or she has refused to call a meeting or has failed to call a meeting within seven days of the presentation of the requisition.

3.2. Business

The business to be conducted at an extraordinary meeting shall be restricted to the item of business contained in the request for the extraordinary meeting and there shall be no consideration of previous minutes or reports from committees etc. except that the Mayor (or person presiding) may at his or her absolute discretion permit other items of business to be conducted for the efficient discharge of the Council's business.

4. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

4.1 Allocation

As well as allocating seats on committees and sub-committees, the Council will allocate seats in the same manner for substitute members.

4.2 Number

For each Committee or Sub-Committee, the Council may appoint up to a maximum of half (50%) the number of substitutes in respect of each political group as that group holds ordinary seats on that committee or sub-committee.

4.3 Powers and duties

Substitute members will have all the powers and duties of any ordinary member of the committee when attending a meeting but will not be able to exercise any special powers or duties exercisable by the person they are substituting.

4.4 Substitution

Substitute members may attend meetings in that capacity only:

(i) to take the place of the ordinary member for whom they are the designated substitute;

(ii) where the ordinary member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and

(iii) after notifying the Monitoring Officer by noon on the day of the meeting of the intended substitution.

4.5 Absence

When the ordinary member and a designated substitute are unable to attend a meeting, a nominated substitute member of the same group may attend the meeting after notifying the Monitoring Officer by 12 noon.

5. TIME AND PLACE OF MEETINGS

The time and place of meeting will be determined by the proper officer and notified in the summons.

6. NOTICE OF AND SUMMONS TO MEETINGS

The proper officer will give notice to the public of the time and place of any meeting in accordance with the Access to Information Rules. At least five clear days before a meeting, the proper officer will send a summons signed by him or her to every member of the Council. The summons will normally be sent via electronic means. The summons will give the date, time and place of each meeting and specify the business to be transacted at the meeting (the agenda) together with accompanying reports.

7. CHAIR OF MEETING

The person presiding at the meeting may exercise any power or duty of the Mayor. Where these rules apply to committee and sub-committee meetings, references to the Mayor also include the chair of committees and sub-committees.

8. QUORUM

The quorum of a meeting will be one quarter of the whole number of members. If, at the end of 15 minutes after the time at which any meeting of the Council is scheduled to start, or at any later point during any meeting, the Mayor counts the number of members present and declares there is not a quorum present, then the meeting will adjourn immediately. Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Mayor. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

9. DURATION OF MEETING

9.1 Interruption of the meeting

The Mayor will adjourn the meeting for a period of ten minutes at a convenient time after one and a half hours.

Where three and a half hours have elapsed after the commencement of any meeting (and in the case of an extraordinary meeting of Council when two hours have elapsed since commencement of the meeting) the Mayor shall interrupt the meeting and the Member speaking must immediately cease doing so and sit down. The meeting shall then dispose of the item then under consideration as if the motion *'That the question be now put*' had been carried (i.e. the debate shall be concluded by the seconder and by the Member who has the right of reply and the vote will then be taken without any further discussion). This rule will not apply to meetings of a quasi-judicial or regulatory nature.

9.2 Motions and recommendations not dealt with

If there are other motions or recommendations on the agenda that have not been dealt with within that period, they are deemed formally moved and seconded (together with any amendments). No speeches will be allowed on these items and the vote will be taken in the usual way.

9.3 Recorded vote

If a recorded vote is called for during this process it will be taken immediately.

9.4 Motions which may be moved

During the process set out in standing orders 9.1- 9.3 above, the only other motions which may be moved are that a matter be withdrawn or that a matter be delegated or referred to an appropriate body or individual for decision or report.

9.5 Close of the meeting

When all motions and recommendations have been dealt with, the Mayor will declare the meeting closed.

10. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC AT MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

10.1 General

Members of the public who are residents of the Borough, or are a representative of a local business or organisation, may ask questions of the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council or the Chair of any Policy and Services Committee or a leader of a political group at ordinary meetings and, at the discretion of the Mayor, extraordinary meetings of the Council. If the question relates to any matter within the terms of reference of the Pensions Committee, any member of the public who is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme in Merseyside or who ordinarily resides within the boundaries of the local authorities which are Scheme Employers, may put the question to the Chair of the Pensions Committee.

10.2 Order of questions

Questions will be asked in the order notice of them was received, except that the Mayor may group together similar questions.

If the questioner has asked a question at a previous meeting, or the local firm or organisation of whom they are a representative has had a question asked on its behalf, the Mayor shall have the right to change the order of questions or to reject questions which are repetitious.

10.3 Notice of questions

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Monitoring Officer no later than midday three working days before the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must name the member of the Council to whom it is to be put. Notice must be provided at this time of any accompanying preamble to be given when putting the question to Council. Questions may be edited as necessary by Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to bring them into proper form and to ensure brevity.

10.4 Number of questions

A person may submit only one question at any one meeting and no more than two questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation or business by two separate individuals.

10.5 Scope of questions

If the Monitoring Officer considers a question:

- is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility, or which affects the Borough;
- is illegal, improper, defamatory, frivolous or offensive;

- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information

he or she will inform the Mayor who will then decide whether or not to reject the question.

10.6 **Record of questions**

The Monitoring Officer will enter each question in a book open to public inspection and will immediately send a copy of the question to the member to whom it is to be put. Rejected questions will include reasons for rejection.

Copies of all questions will be circulated to all members and will be made available to the public attending the meeting.

10.7 **Asking the question at the meeting**

The Mayor will invite the questioner to put the question to the Member named in the notice. The question to be put at the meeting shall not exceed 100 words in length. If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, they may ask the Mayor to put the question on their behalf. The Mayor may ask the question on the questioner's behalf, indicate that a written reply will be given or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with. A total of 30 minutes is allocated to public questions.

10.8 **Supplemental question**

A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the member who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. The Mayor may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds in Standing Order 10.5 above. One minute is allowed for putting the supplementary question.

10.9 **Answers**

Every question shall be put and answered without discussion, but the person to whom the question has been put may decline to answer. An answer may take the form of:

(a) a direct oral answer, for which two minutes are allowed for answering a question and two minutes are allowed for answering a supplementary question;

(b) where the information requested is contained in a publication of the Council, a reference to that publication; or

(c) a written answer to be provided later to the questioner, where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, in which circumstance the councillor questioned will arrange for the written response to be provided to the questioner and circulated to all members within 10 working days thereafter and included as an addendum to the Minutes.

10.10 **Reference of question to a Committee**

Unless the Mayor decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the appropriate committee or sub-committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

10.11 **Regulatory Committees**

Separate arrangements are in place for the public to ask questions and make representations at meetings of the Planning, Licensing and Regulatory Committees, which are set out in specific schemes applicable to the proceedings of those meetings.

11. STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

11.1 Representations

A member of the public may speak on up to two non-procedural items on any Agenda if notice has been given no later than midday three working days before the day of the meeting. The statement that is intended to be read is strongly encouraged to be sent to the Monitoring Officer by no later than midday one working day before the date of the meeting. The Mayor may, at his or her discretion, limit the number of speakers and the time each speaker may speak for. No speech should exceed three minutes. Each member of the public may only speak once. Public speaking on any one item shall not exceed 10 minutes, subject to the Mayor's discretion to extend the time if he or she considers it appropriate. *Statements made by members of the public under this standing order, shall not be improper, defamatory, or offensive in content. If a statement is considered by the Mayor to be improper, defamatory, or offensive, his or her discretion includes deciding whether to direct the member of public to cease making their statement.*

11.2 Petitions

Petitions may be presented to the Council if provided to Democratic and Member Services no later than 12 noon, 3 working days before the meeting, at the discretion of the Mayor. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding three minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Mayor will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. If a petition contains more than 5,000 signatures, it will be debated at a subsequent meeting of Council.

12. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS AT COUNCIL

12.1 On reports of Committees

A Member of the Council may ask the Leader or the Chair of a Committee any question without notice upon an item of the report of a committee when that item is being received or under consideration by the Council.

12.2 Questions on notice at full Council

Subject to Standing Order 12.4, at an Ordinary Meeting of the Council a Member may ask the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, the Chair of any of the Council's Committees or a Leader of a Political Group on the Council, or representatives on Joint Authorities questions on matters which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the area of the Council and which fall within their responsibility, or which fall within the responsibility of the relevant Joint Authority.

12.3 **Questions on notice at committees and sub-committees**

Subject to Standing Order 12.4, a member of a Committee or Sub-Committee may ask the Chair of it a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the Borough and which falls within the terms of reference of that committee or subcommittee.

12.4 **Notice of questions**

A Member may only ask a question under Standing Order 12.2 or 12.3 if:

a) notice of the question has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Monitoring Officer no later than midday three working days before the day of the meeting; or

b) the question relates to urgent matters, in which event they have the consent of the Mayor (or the Chair of the Committee to whom the question is to be put) and the content of the question is given to the Monitoring Officer by noon on the day of the meeting.

12.5 **Scope of questions**

If the Monitoring Officer considers any question:

- is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility, or which affects the Borough;
- is illegal, improper, defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or

requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
he or she will inform the Mayor who will then decide whether or not to reject the question.

12.6 **Response**

An answer may take the form of:

a) a direct oral answer, which response should be brief, succinct and to the point.;

b) by reference to published material of the Council which is readily available to Members; or

c) a written answer circulated to Members of the Council either during the meeting at which the question is asked or subsequently, in which circumstance the Member questioned will arrange for the written response to be sent to all

Members within 10 working days thereafter and included as an addendum to the Minutes.

12.7 **Supplementary question**

Every question, which will be limited to one part, will be asked and answered without discussion. Upon receiving the answer, the Member who put the question shall be allowed one supplementary question, provided that it arises directly out of the original question or the reply and does not introduce any new subject matter.

The supplementary question will be asked and answered orally, but the person to whom the supplementary question has been asked may decline to answer.

12.8 **Time limits for questions and responses**

No question will exceed one minute and no answer will exceed two minutes.

13. **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

13.1 **Notice**

Except for motions which can be moved without notice under Standing Order 14, written notice of every motion, must be delivered to the Monitoring Officer in its initial form by nine clear working days before the date of the meeting (the Monday of the second week before each ordinary meeting of the Council where held on a Monday) and in final form noon seven clear working days before the date of the meeting (the Wednesday of the second week before each ordinary meeting of the Council where held on a Monday). Each political group can submit a maximum of one motion on notice at a Council meeting. In the event of a motion being submitted from a Member who is not a member of a political group, the Director of Law and Governance will consult the Mayor in respect to the inclusion of the motion on the agenda.

13.2 **Motion set out in agenda**

Motions for which notice has been given will be listed on the agenda, unless the member giving notice states, in writing, that they propose to move it to a later meeting. The first motion listed on the agenda will be rotated at each Council meeting to enable the opportunity for any political Group or motion submitted by a Member who is not a member of a political group to be the debated first. Motions listed on the agenda thereafter will be in political group size order. This process will be managed by the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Mayor.

13.3 **Amendments to Motions on Notice**

All amendments to motions on notice must be delivered to the Monitoring Officer in their initial form by 10.00am three working days before the date of the meeting (the Wednesday of the week the meeting of the Council where held on a Monday) and must comply with the requirements of Standing Order 15.6.

The Member submitting the amendment must then confirm in writing to the Monitoring Officer by 12 noon one working day before the meeting whether the amendment is to go forward, or notify the Monitoring Officer of any changes to the amendment. If no

withdrawal, confirmation or change is received by the Monitoring Officer, it will be assumed that the amendment is to be considered in its initial form.
The Mayor may allow amendments without notice, or alterations to amendments, in exceptional circumstances where the Mayor considers it conducive or necessary to the business of the Council to do so.

13.4 **Scope**

If the Monitoring Officer considers a motion or an amendment to a motion:

- is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility, or which affects the Borough;
- is illegal, improper, defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a motion which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information

he or she will inform the Mayor who will then decide whether or not to reject the motion.

14 MOTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

The following motions may be moved without notice:

a) to appoint a chair of the meeting at which the motion is moved;

b) in relation to the accuracy of the minutes;

c) to change the order of business in the agenda;

d) to refer something to an appropriate body or individual;

e) to appoint a committee or member arising from an item on the summons for the meeting;

f) to receive reports or adoption of recommendations of committees or officers and any resolutions following from them;

g) to withdraw a motion;

h) to amend a motion (members are strongly encouraged, where possible, to share motions and amendments with fellow Committee Members in advance of the meeting);

i) to proceed to the next business;

j) that the question be now put'

k) to adjourn a debate;

l) that the meeting continues beyond 3.5 hours in duration (2 in the case of an extraordinary meeting);

m) to suspend a particular Council Standing Order;

n) to exclude the public and press in accordance with the Access to Information Rules;

o) to not hear further a member named under Standing Order 20.3 or to exclude them from the meeting under Standing Order 20.4; and

p) to give the consent of the Council where its consent is required by this Constitution.

15. RULES OF DEBATE

15.1 No speeches until motion seconded

No speeches may be made after the mover has moved a proposal and explained the purpose of it until the motion has been seconded.

15.2 Right to require motion in writing

Unless notice of the motion has already been given, the Mayor may require it to be written down and handed to him or her before it is discussed.

15.3 Seconder's speech

When seconding a motion or amendment, a Member shall reserve their speech until immediately before the reply made by either the Mayor or the mover of the original motion under Standing Order 15.9. No further ordinary speeches shall be made after the seconder has spoken.

15.4 Content and length of speeches

Speeches must be directed to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or point of order. The proposer of a motion may speak for up to 5 minutes when introducing the motion. No other speech may exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the Mayor.

15.5 When a Member may speak again

A Member who has spoken on a motion may not speak again whilst it is the subject of debate, except:

a) to speak once on an amendment moved by another Member;

b) to move a further amendment if the motion has been amended since he or she last spoke;

c) if his or her first speech was on an amendment moved by another Member, to speak on the main issue (whether or not the amendment on which he or she spoke was carried);

d) in exercise of a right of reply (as per 15.9 below);

e) on a point of order (as per 15.12 below); and

f) by way of personal explanation (as per 15.13 below).

15.6 Amendments

a) An amendment to a motion must be relevant to the motion and will either be:

i. to refer the matter to an appropriate Committee, body or individual for consideration or reconsideration;

ii. to leave out words;

iii. to leave out words and insert or add others; or

iv. to insert or add words.

as long as the effect of (ii) to (iv) is not to negate the motion.

b) Only one amendment may be moved and discussed at any one time. No further amendment may be moved until the amendment under discussion has been disposed of.

c) If an amendment is not carried, other amendments to the original motion may be moved.

d) If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended takes the place of the original motion. This becomes the substantive motion to which any further amendments are moved.

e) After an amendment has been carried, the Mayor will read out the amended motion before accepting any further amendments, or if there are none, put it to the vote.

15.7 **Alteration of motion**

a) A Member may alter a motion of which he or she has given notice with the consent of the meeting. The meeting's consent will be signified without discussion.

b) A Member may alter a motion which he or she has moved without notice with the consent of both the meeting and the seconder. The meeting's consent will be signified without discussion.

c) Only alterations which could be made as an amendment may be made.

15.8 **Withdrawal of motion**

A member may withdraw a motion which he/she has moved with the consent of both the meeting and the seconder. The meeting's consent will be signified without discussion. No member may speak on the motion after the mover has asked permission to withdraw it unless permission is refused.

15.9 **Right of reply**

a) The mover of a motion has a right to reply at the end of the debate on the motion, immediately before it is put to the vote.

b) If an amendment is moved, the mover of the original motion has the right of reply at the close of the debate on the amendment, but may not otherwise speak on it.

c) The mover of the amendment has no right of reply to the debate on his or her amendment.

15.10 **Motions which may be moved during debate**

When a motion is under debate, no other motion may be moved except the following procedural motions:

a) to withdraw a motion;

b) to amend a motion;

c) to proceed to the next business;

d) that the question be now put;

e) to adjourn a debate;

f) that the meeting continues beyond 3.5 hours in duration (2 in the case of an extraordinary meeting);

g) to exclude the public and press in accordance with the Access to Information Rules; and

h) to not hear further a member named under Standing Order 20.3 or to exclude them from the meeting under Standing Order 20.4.

15.11 **Closure motions**

a) A Member may move, without comment, the following motions at the end of a speech of another member;

   i. to proceed to the next business;

   ii. that the question be now put;

   iii. to adjourn a debate; or

   iv. to adjourn a meeting.

b) If a motion to proceed to next business is seconded and the Mayor thinks the item has been sufficiently discussed, he or she will give the mover of the original motion a right of reply and then put the procedural motion to the vote.

c) If a motion that the question be now put is seconded and the Mayor thinks the item has been sufficiently discussed, he/she will put the procedural motion to the vote. If it is passed he/she will give the mover of the original motion a right of reply before putting his/her motion to the vote.

d) If a motion to adjourn the debate or to adjourn the meeting is seconded and the Mayor thinks the item has not been sufficiently discussed and cannot reasonably be so discussed on that occasion, he/she will put the procedural motion to the vote without giving the mover of the original motion the right of reply.

15.12 **Point of order**

A Member may raise a point of order at any time. The Mayor will hear them immediately. A point of order may only relate to an alleged breach of these Council Rules of Procedure or the law. The member must indicate the rule or law and the way in which he/she considers it has been broken. The ruling of the Mayor on the matter will be final.

15.13 **Personal explanation**

A Member may make a personal explanation at any time. A personal explanation may only relate to some material part of an earlier speech by the member which may appear to have been misunderstood in the present debate. The ruling of the Mayor on the admissibility of a personal explanation will be final.

15.14 **Motions affecting persons employed by the Council**

If any question arises at a meeting of the Council as to the appointment, promotion, dismissal, salary, superannuation or conditions of service, or as to the conduct, of any person employed by the Council, that question shall not be discussed until the Council, committee or sub-committee has decided whether or not the power of exclusion of the public under the Access to Information Rules should be exercised.

15.15 **Joint Debates**

The Mayor or Council can agree to deal with the two or more related motions or amendments in one debate. Each mover and seconder of a motion should have the right to speak in accordance with Standing Order 15.3, 15.2 and 15.9. Separate votes shall be taken on each motion and amendment as if the debate had otherwise taken place in accordance with this Standing Order 15.

16. **PREVIOUS DECISIONS AND MOTIONS**

16.1 **Motion to rescind a previous decision**

A motion or amendment to rescind a decision made at a meeting of Council within the past six months cannot be moved unless the notice of motion is signed by at least 17 members.

16.2 **Motion similar to one previously rejected**

A motion or amendment in similar terms to one that has been rejected at a meeting of Council in the past six months cannot be moved unless the notice of motion or amendment is signed by at least 17 Members. Once the motion or amendment is dealt with, no one can propose a similar motion or amendment for six months.

16.3 **Reconsideration during the meeting**

No resolution or recommendation (other than a procedural resolution) made by a committee or panel during the course of a meeting shall be rescinded or amended by the committee or panel during the same meeting or any adjournment of it unless there

are reasonable grounds for believing that all of the material information was not available at the time that the resolution or recommendation was passed.

17. VOTING

17.1 Majority

Unless this Constitution provides otherwise, any matter will be decided by a simple majority of those Members voting and present in the room and seated in their places at the time the question is put.

17.2 Casting Vote

If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Mayor will have the right to exercise a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Mayor chooses to exercise a casting vote, including the choice not to use such vote.

17.3 Method of Voting

Unless a recorded vote is demanded under 17.4 below, the Mayor will take the vote by use of the electronic voting system or, if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.

The Mayor may decide at any time to discontinue use of the electronic voting system if satisfied that it is not working correctly. If the Mayor considers that there has been any malfunction of the equipment or any incorrect use of it, the Mayor may require or allow the vote to be retaken, either electronically or by show of hands.

Where the electronic voting system is not working correctly or unavailable, the Mayor will take the vote by show of hands.

17.4 Recorded Vote

If a Member of the Council makes a request before a vote is taken and is supported by five other members rising in their places, the voting on any question shall be by roll-call and the names for and against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting will be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes.

This Standing Order will apply automatically in respect of a vote taken at a Budget Decision Meeting of the Council in accordance with the Budget and Procedure Rules at Part 4(3) of this Constitution.

17.5 Right to Require Individual Vote to be Recorded

Where any Member requests it immediately after the vote is taken, their vote will be so recorded in the minutes to show whether he/she voted for or against the motion or abstained from voting.

17.6 Voting on Appointments

If there are more than two people nominated for any position to be filled and there is not a clear majority of votes in favour of one person, then the name of the person with

the least number of votes will be taken off the list and a new vote taken. The process will continue until there is a majority of votes for one person. (This includes the office of the Mayor which is by election by Council).

18. MINUTES

18.1 Signing the minutes

The Mayor will sign the minutes of the proceedings at the next suitable meeting. The Mayor will move that the minutes of the previous meeting be signed as a correct record. The only part of the minutes that can be discussed is their accuracy.

18.2 No requirement to sign minutes of previous meeting at extraordinary meeting

Where in relation to any meeting, the next meeting for the purpose of signing the minutes is a meeting called under paragraph 3 of schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972 (an Extraordinary Meeting), then the next following meeting (being a meeting called otherwise than under that paragraph) will be treated as a suitable meeting for the purposes of paragraph 41(1) and (2) of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972relating to signing of minutes.

18.3 Form of minutes

Minutes will contain all motions and amendments in the exact form and order the Mayor put them.

19. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

Members of the public and press may only be excluded either in accordance with the Access to Information Rules in Part 4(2) of this Constitution or Standing Order 21 (Disturbance by Public).

20. MEMBERS' CONDUCT

20.1 Standing to speak

When a Member speaks at Full Council they must stand and address the meeting through the Mayor. If more than one Member stands, the Mayor will ask one to speak and the others must sit. Other Members must remain seated whilst a Member is speaking unless they wish to make a point of order or a point of personal explanation.

20.2 Mayor standing

When the Mayor stands during a debate, any Member speaking at the time must stop and sit down. The meeting must be silent.

20.3 Member not to be heard further

If a Member persistently disregards the ruling of the Mayor by behaving improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs business, the Mayor may move that the Member be not heard further. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

20.4 **Member to leave the meeting**

If the Member continues to behave improperly after such a motion is carried, the Mayor may move that either the Member leaves the meeting or that meeting is adjourned a specified period. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

20.5 **General disturbance**

If there is a general disturbance making orderly business impossible, the Mayor may adjourn the meeting for as long as he or she thinks necessary.

21. DISTURBANCE BY PUBLIC

21.1 **Removal of member of the public**

If a member of the public interrupts or otherwise disturbs the conduct of proceedings, the Mayor will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Mayor will order their removal from the meeting room.

21.2 **Clearance of part of meeting room**

If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Mayor may call for that part to be cleared.

22. PHOTOGRAPHY AND AUDIO/VISUAL RECORDING OF MEETINGS

Any member of the public may film, audio record, take photographs and use social media to report the proceedings of any meeting that is open to the public in accordance with the published notices.

23. SUSPENSION AND AMENDMENT OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

23.1 **Suspension**

All of these Council Standing Orders, except 17.4, 17.5 and 18.2 (which are amongst the mandatory standing orders), may be suspended by motion on notice or without notice if at least one half of the whole number of members of the Council are present. Suspension can only be for the duration of the meeting.

23.2 **Amendment**

Any motion to add to, vary or revoke these Council Standing Orders will, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

24. APPLICATION TO COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

All of the Council Standing Orders apply to meetings of Full Council.

These Council Standing Orders also apply to all Committee and Sub-Committee meetings, except:

- 1-3 (meetings of Full Council);
- 4 (appointment of substitute committee members by Council); and
- 20.1 (standing to speak).

And

- 11.1 (statements and petitions – representations) shall not apply to Planning Committee or Strategic Applications Sub-Committee and in its place the Protocol for the Right to Speak at Planning Committee and Strategic Applications Sub-Committee meetings shall apply.

Protocol for the Right to Speak at Planning Committee and Strategic Applications Sub-Committee meetings

In this protocol reference to Committee shall be construed (as appropriate) to either the Planning Committee or the Strategic Applications Sub Committee.

1. When an application is before the Committee for decision members of the public and consultees are given the right to address the Committee. The person who speaks may be the applicant, a supporter or objector, , their agent, or award councillor. A person seeking to exercise the above right to speak should lodge a written request with the Council's Committee Services by 12 noon, 3 working days prior to the Committee date.

2. It will be a matter for the Chair (where appropriate with prior consultation with ward councillors) to determine who should speak for objectors or supporters if more than one objector or supporter has requested to speak. The Guidance on Speaking at Committee contains more details on this process.

3. A supporter will be considered to be a person that is in favour of the proposal but is unconnected to the application.

4. A Ward Councillor may address the Committee on any application made in relation to their Ward or made in relation to a matter which will have implications for their ward.

5. If a statutory consultee or local consultee wishes to make representations on any application that they have been consulted on before the Committee, they shall be able to do so. They will be given a maximum of 5 minutes to address the Committee.

6. The applicant or their agent will be given the right to speak in respect of their application whether or not objectors have exercised their own rights to speak.

7. Time limits for speakers – Speakers will be expected to conclude their address to the committee within 5 minutes. All time allocations referred to in this protocol do not include the time spent in answering any questions the Committee may raise with the speaker. No material is to be circulated at the meeting unless by prior agreement. Presentation aids will be permitted if approved in advance of the committee meeting.

8. Members of the Committee have the right to speak at Committee meetings as set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

Guidance on the Right to Speak at Planning Committee and Strategic Applications Sub Committee meetings

If you are thinking of speaking at the committee meeting, please read the

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Right to speak at the Planning Committee meeting

When an application is before the Committee for a decision this procedure allows members of the public to attend a Planning Committee meeting and speak for or against an application prior to the Planning Committee making a decision about a planning application or other item on the public agenda. The following people/groups are eligible to speak;

(i) objectors or supporters are given the right to address the Committee. A spokesperson may be nominated, or a representative of the written objectors or supporters or their agent can exercise the right to speak on their behalf.

(ii) the applicant or their agent will be given the right to speak in respect of their application whether or not the objectors or petitioners have exercised their own rights to speak.

(iii) consultees to the application to be determined.

(iv) ward members for the application.

A person seeking to exercise the above right to speak should lodge a written request with the Council's Committee Services by 12 noon, 3 working days prior to the Committee date. With the Chair's discretion however, a person may speak if they have not lodged their request in time.

Number of people allowed to speak

In circumstances where more than one person wishes to speak the chair will invite you to nominate one spokesperson. If there can be no agreement as to one spokesperson the Chair may allow a number of speakers but they must share the time allowed for that group of speakers. The Chair has a general discretion which may be exercised to extend time limits, but this will normally only be exercised in exceptional cases.

Time allowed

A total of 5 minutes is allowed for each category of speaker.

Ward councillors will have five minutes to address the committee on any application made in their ward.

This time allocation does not include time spent answering the committee's questions.

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Once written objections reach the trigger point (15 objections) you will be contacted by a democratic services officer and asked to confirm if you want to speak. It will then be a matter for the Chair (where appropriate with prior consultation with ward councillors) to determine who should speak for objectors if more than one objector has requested to speak.

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The Committee may ask questions. The questions will be limited to clarification on what has been said. You may decline to answer questions.

Circulation of photographs, drawings or other plans

In order to be fair to all parties, no presentation aids will be permitted unless approved in advance of the meeting. The circulation of written documents, information, photographs, drawings or other plans to committee members will not be allowed at the meeting. However, these can be submitted in advance of the meeting by post or email to the relevant planning officer. In order to allow time to properly review any material and include it in the agenda supplement or addendum issued to take account of matters arising after the publication of the main agenda, if appropriate, please ensure they are submitted to the relevant planning officer by 12 noon, 3 working days before the meeting.

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The time of arrival of people wishing to speak

Persons wishing to speak should arrive no later than 5.45pm and report to the democratic services officer giving your name and the item you wish to speak on.

Key 'Material Planning Considerations' that the committee considers when looking at a planning application

In their determination of applications, the Committee can only consider each individual application on its own merits, upon the basis of the decision making policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Development Plan and other material considerations.

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Material Considerations:

- Local Plan policy
- National government Guidance
- Case law and previous decisions
- The effect on the enjoyment of neighbouring properties
- Design and appearance of layout
- Conservation matters
- Highway safety and traffic
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policies

Not Material Considerations:

- Matters covered by other laws. (e.g. Licencing)
- Private property rights (e.g. boundaries or access disputes)
- The developers motives
- Possible future development

- Loss of view over other people's land
- The effect on the value of the property
- Covenants

Statements made by members of the public under this protocol, shall not be improper, defamatory, or offensive in content. If a statement is considered by the Chair to be improper, defamatory, or offensive, it is in his or her discretion to determine whether to direct the person to cease making their statement.

The committee procedure

The Chair will take items dependent upon the number of people in attendance.

1. The application is introduced by the Chair
2. Presentation of report by planning officer
3. The Chair will call upon the persons objecting to the proposal to speak. The Committee members may ask questions of clarification on what has been said.
4. The Chair will call upon the persons supporting to the proposal to speak. The Committee members may ask questions of clarification on what has been said.
5. The Chair will ask if any consultees wish to address the Committee. The Committee members may ask questions of clarification on what has been said.
6. The Chair will call upon the ward councillor to speak and Committee members may ask questions of clarification on what has been said.
7. The Chair will call upon the applicant or their agent to speak. The Committee members may ask questions of clarification on what has been said.
8. The planning officer will comment on any factual matters raised by the speakers.
9. The Committee will debate the applications and ask questions to officers.
10. The Committee will vote on the application and reach a decision.
11. After each decision the Chair will inform the meeting of the decision.

Further Information

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FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Finance Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules provide the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs. They apply to every Member and Officer and anyone acting on its behalf, including School Governors operating under local delegation arrangements. All decision makers need to ensure that they are not only empowered under the Constitution to make a decision, but that they are also authorised under these Rules to incur the financial consequences of every decision that they make.

1.2. Where urgent action becomes necessary as a result of some unforeseen emergency the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance officer (or nominated representative), may take appropriate action and waive the Financial Regulations. Every use of this rule must be reported by the Director of Finance officer, in writing, to the next available meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council.

1.3. The Director of Finance is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the Finance Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules and submitting any additions or changes necessary to the Full Council for approval. The Director of Finance is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the Finance Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

1.4. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of the existence and content of the Council's Finance and Contract Procedure Rules and other internal regulatory documents and that they comply with them, as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees and this Constitution. Failure to comply with the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action.

1.5. The Director of Finance is responsible for issuing advice and guidance to underpin the Finance Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules that Councillors, Officers and others acting on behalf of the Council are required to follow.

1.6. Councillors have a fiduciary duty to local taxpayers to spend money wisely and to balance the interests of those who will pay against the interests of those who will benefit from the expenditure.

1.7. The Rules are not intended to cover every eventuality, but the spirit of the Rules must always be followed. Should there be a requirement for interpretation or any conflict between these Financial Regulations and any other part of the Constitution, the Monitoring Officer should be consulted. Should any conflict between these Financial Regulations and the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Rules, at Part 4(3) of this Constitution, the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Rules prevail.

2. Financial management

2.1. Responsibilities

2.1.1. Financial management covers all financial accountabilities in relation to the running of the Council, including the policy framework, revenue budget, trading activities' financial plans, capital programme and treasury management.

2.1.2. Committees are responsible for discharging the Council's functions within the Budget and Policy Framework provided by Council. The Budget will be aligned with Committee and Directors of Service responsibilities as far as possible.

2.1.3. The Audit and Risk Management Committee has a right of access to all the information necessary to effectively discharge its responsibilities and may consult directly with internal and external auditors. The Audit and Risk Management Committee is responsible for a range of matters as set out in Council's Constitution. The Committee's responsibilities with regard to the financial management of the Council include:

2.1.3.1. overseeing the Council's role and responsibilities in respect of Corporate Governance and Audit

2.1.3.2. ensuring that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit is actively promoted

2.1.3.3. approving the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts

2.1.3.4. approving the annual Internal Audit plan, and receiving reports from the Council's Internal Auditor, including the annual report of the Chief Internal Auditor

2.1.3.5. ensuring the Council's Risk Management arrangements are operating effectively

2.1.3.6. monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's Financial Regulations, Procurement Policy and Procedures and other strategies for counter fraud and corruption, anti-bribery, declarations of interest, gifts and hospitality, whistle blowing and anti-money laundering.

2.1.4. The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) is the Council's 'responsible financial officer' under the Accounts and Audit Regulations. They are responsible for the proper administration of the Council's affairs as specified in, and undertaking the duties required by Section 151 of the Local

Government Act 1972, Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and all other relevant legislation.

In order to fulfil these statutory duties and legislative requirements the Director of Finance will:

2.1.4.1. set appropriate financial management standards for the Council which comply with the Council's policies and proper accounting practices, and monitor compliance with them

2.1.4.2. determine the accounting records and systems to be kept by the Council and the form of any supporting records. The Director of Finance officer shall ensure that the accounting systems approved are observed and maintained

2.1.4.3. ensure there is an appropriate framework of budgetary management and control

2.1.4.4. monitor performance against the Council's budget and advise upon the corporate financial position

2.1.4.5. ensure proper professional practices are adhered to and to act as Head of Profession in relation to the standards, performances and development of finance staff throughout the Council; all finance staff will have a direct reporting line to the Director of Finance officer

2.1.4.6. prepare and publish the Council's Statement of Accounts for each financial year, in accordance with the statutory timetable and arrangements specified by law

2.1.4.7. make proper arrangements for the audit of the Council's annual statement of accounts

2.1.4.8. ensure that claims for funds, including grants, are made by the due date and in compliance with the grant terms and conditions

2.1.4.9. make proper arrangements for the overall management of the Council's Internal Audit function

2.1.4.10. manage the treasury management activities in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators

2.1.4.11. manage the Pension Fund within the scope of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations

2.1.4.12. provide advice and guidance to reinforce the Financial Regulations that Members, Officers and others acting on behalf of the Council are required to follow

2.1.4.13. maintain and continuously review the Financial Regulations and implement any changes

2.1.4.14. take responsibility for advising the Council on corporate financial matters ; Chief Officers shall have responsibility for advising Members or Committees on financial matters relevant to their own service areas, where possible in consultation with the Director of Finance

2.1.5. Senior Leadership Team members are responsible for financial management within their directorates and spending within the limits of the budgetary framework set by Council. They shall manage the development of budget proposals with a detailed assessment of financial implications within the Budget and Policy Framework agreed by the Council.

2.2. Schemes of Financial Delegation

The Senior Leadership Team members will establish, operate and keep under review local Schemes of Financial Delegation to ensure that the day-to-day financial management of services within their directorate is carried out in a secure, efficient and effective manner, and in accordance with the Finance Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules and associated relevant guidance.

2.3. Revenue budget monitoring and control

Once the budget is approved by the Council, Chief Officers are authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the approved budget, subject to the limits in the Constitution and local Schemes of Financial Delegation to officers. Chief Officers must, however, maintain effective budgetary control within their service to ensure that spending is contained within the annual budget limit and to secure value for money.

2.3.1. It is the responsibility of Senior Leadership Team to control income and expenditure within their area and to monitor performance, taking account of financial information and guidance provided by the Director of Finance. They must report on variances within their own areas. They must also take any action necessary to avoid exceeding their budget allocation and alert the Director of Finance to any potential overspending or under-achievement of income budgets in a timely manner.

2.3.1.1. The Director of Finance, with the support of the Senior Leadership Team, is responsible for establishing an appropriate framework of budgetary management and control which ensures that:

- budget management is exercised within annual budget limits unless the Full Council agrees otherwise
- timely information on receipts and payments is made available, which is sufficiently detailed to enable officers to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities
- expenditure is committed only against an approved budget.
- all officers responsible for committing expenditure comply with relevant guidance and Finance and Contract Procedure Rules. Consideration must also be given to the requirements relating to key decisions. (Part 4, Section 2, paragraph 8 of the Constitution).
- each cost centre has a single named manager, determined by the relevant Head of Service. As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making processes that commits expenditure
- significant variances from approved budgets are investigated and reported by budget managers regularly.

2.3.1.2. Reports shall be produced to Committees and Full Council, with the relevant Chief Officer or Head of Service, where they are unable to balance expenditure and resources within existing approved budgets under their control

2.3.1.3. Reports shall be produced on the Council's projected income and expenditure compared with the budget on a regular basis.

2.3.1.4. Schemes of Financial Delegation are maintained for all functions within their area of responsibility

2.3.1.5. A Business Case is prepared for all revenue proposals with a significant financial impact, risk profile or policy change.

2.3.2. Scheme of virement

The scheme of virement is intended to enable budgets to be managed with a degree of flexibility within the overall framework determined by the Council, and therefore optimise the use of resources.

2.3.2.1. Virements are not permitted:

- in relation to asset charges or other budget headings that are deemed to be outside the control of the relevant budget holder, or where a proposal would adversely affect long-term revenue commitments
- between staffing and non-staff budgets

- between revenue and capital budgets

2.3.2.2. Budget virements are subject to the following approval limits

- up to and including £100,000 - Chief Officer in consultation with the Budget Holder
- more than £100,000 but no more than £500,000 – Relevant Committees in consultation with Chief Officers may approve virement of revenue budget up to and including £500,000 (cumulatively up to £1,000,000 over the financial year) provided that there is no virement of revenue budget transfer between 'Directorates' (Budget Heads)
- amounts above £500,000 must be referred to Policy and Resources Committee which may vire an amount over £500,000 where it considers that virement across budget heads or budgets has become necessary or desirable, is consistent with approved Council policy and there would be no consequential revenue effects in later years.

2.3.2.3. Budget virements are not subject to the approval limits where a budget will continue to be used for the approved purpose but is being moved, for example, to reflect a change in budget holder responsibilities. Such transfers will however require the approval of the relevant representative of the Director of Finance.

2.4. Capital Programme monitoring and control

Once the Capital Programme has been approved, project owners must ensure that the scheme is appropriately managed. Monitoring and reporting requirements are outlined in section 3.3 Capital Programme.

2.5. Treatment of year-end balances

2.5.1. Overspends or underspends in relation to the approved revenue budget may occur for a variety of reasons. With regard to General Fund budgets, there is no 'as of right' carry forward of underspends from one financial year to another except where this is provided for by a binding partnership agreement or other legal agreement with a third party. Individual School's budgets are ring-fenced in accordance with statutory provisions thus overspends and underspends are always carried forward into future years.

2.5.2. Any revenue underspending at the year-end may be carried forward, subject to the agreement of the Director of Finance following consideration of the overall financial position by the Policy and Resources Committee. All carry forward proposals must be supported by an appropriate Business Case demonstrating that the underspend was planned and that the resources carried forward will be earmarked for a specific and appropriate purpose. Where carry-forwards are agreed, they will be allocated to an Earmarked Reserve until they are utilised.

2.5.3. Capital schemes in particular can be prone to delay. It cannot be assumed that underspends will automatically roll forward into the following year. Requests to carry forward funding should make clear whether they are due to re-profiling of schemes or for other reasons. Requests for carry forward should be made to the Director of Finance officer who will report variances to the Capital Programme to Council for final approval.

2.6. Accounting Policies, Records and Returns

2.6.1. The Director of Finance is responsible for control and assurance and therefore determines appropriate accounting policies and procedures; exercising oversight of financial and accounting records and systems; and preparing and publishing reports containing statements on the overall finances of the Council, including the annual statement of accounts.

2.6.2. Financial statements must present fairly the financial position of the Council and its expenditure and income.

2.6.3. All accounts and accounting records will be compiled by the Director of Finance or under their direction. The form and content of records maintained in other directorates will be approved by the Director of Finance along with reconciliation procedures.

2.6.4. The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that the annual statement of accounts is prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (CIPFA/LASAAC).

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2.6.5. All statutory financial returns must be completed in line with published guidelines and timescales.

2.6.6. Financial records must be retained in line with statutory requirements and the Corporate Record Retention Policy.

3. Financial Planning

3.1. Budget and policy framework

3.1.1. The Council is responsible for agreeing a framework of corporate policies that set out and underpin the Corporate Plan. The key elements of this framework are:

3.1.1.1. The Council Plan – this sets out the longer term aims and objectives for Wirral.

3.1.1.2. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – this brings together the key assumptions about financing resources (including council tax, non-domestic rates and government funding settlements) and spending pressures over the medium to longer term. This enables the Council to plan for financial risks and thus inform the setting of service financial targets for the annual revenue budget and capital payments guidelines.

The Director of Finance will ensure that the MTFS is presented to the Policy and Resources Committee and Council as part of the annual budget setting process.

The responsibilities of the Director of Finance are to:

- develop a minimum three-year MTFS (including the current budget year)
- undertake a formal review of the MTFS on an annual basis and update where necessary

Chief Officers must provide information that may be requested by the Director of Finance to support the MTFS

3.1.1.3. Revenue Budget – this is the financial expression of the Council's Corporate Plans. It sets out the allocation of resources to Committees, services and projects, the level of contingency funding, the Council Tax base and Council Tax rate, borrowing limits and capital financing requirements. See also section 3.2 Revenue Budget.

3.1.1.4. Capital Programme – Capital expenditure involves acquiring or enhancing fixed assets with a long-term value to the Council, such as land, buildings, and major items of plant, equipment or vehicles. Capital assets shape the way services are delivered in the long term and create financial commitments for the future in the form of financing costs and revenue running costs. See also section 3.3 Capital Programme.

3.1.1.5. Treasury Management Strategy – this sets out the arrangements for the management of the Council's borrowing, lending, cash flows and investments. After review by Audit & Risk Management Committee, the Policy and Resources Committee, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, will propose an annual Treasury Management Strategy, a set of Prudential Indicators and a policy for making revenue provision for the repayment of debt (referred to as the 'Minimum Revenue Provision' policy) to the Council in advance of the start of the relevant financial year. These will be consistent with the Council's revenue budget and capital programme proposals. These documents are required to comply with CIPFA's Codes of Practice on Treasury Management and the Prudential Framework for Capital Finance, relevant Regulations and with the Council's own Treasury Management Policy Statement and Treasury

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Management Practices; they will set the parameters within which investment and borrowing activity will be managed during the forthcoming financial year.

3.1.1.6. Fees and charging policy - Chief Officers, in consultation with the Director of Finance, will follow the relevant charging policy for the supply of goods or services where charges may be lawfully applied. Charges will be reviewed annually. All new charges, and amendments to existing charges, will be subject to formal approval in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Further detail on income is provided in Section 5.2.

3.1.1.7. Pay policy - the pay policy statement will be prepared as required by law. At present it is required to set out the Council's policy on the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer, the remuneration of its lowest paid employees, and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief and other officers. It is also required to address other specific aspects of chief officer remuneration such as remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, use of performance related pay and bonuses, termination payments and transparency.

3.1.1.8. Specific Service Plans and Strategies which have a financial implication.

3.2. Revenue budget

The revenue budget reflects the day to day running costs and associated receipts of the Council. This includes costs for salaries, energy, traveling and other costs incurred in providing services plus income raised by charging service users and government grants.

3.2.1. The Director of Finance will determine the general format of the budget.

3.2.2. The Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Director of Finance officer, will manage the preparation of the budget on an annual basis for consideration by the Council in line with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules. The annual budget will include allocations to different services and projects, proposed taxation levels and contingencies.

3.2.3. Detailed budgets, as proposed by Chief Officers, will be subject to challenge and review through a process determined by the Director of Finance.

3.2.4. The Director of Finance is responsible for reporting to Full Council on the robustness of estimates contained within the budget and the adequacy of reserves allowed for in the budget proposals.

3.2.5. The Council shall not approve amendments to either revenue or capital budgets without first having considered the advice of the Director of Finance on the financial implications arising.

3.2.6. The Director of Finance is responsible for providing appropriate financial information to enable budgets to be monitored effectively. He or she must monitor and control expenditure against budget allocations at a corporate level and report to the relevant Committees on the overall position on a regular basis. See also section 2.3 Revenue budget monitoring and control.

3.3. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the Authority's plan of capital projects and spending over future years. The Policy and Resources Committee, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, will manage the preparation of a capital programme, on behalf of the Council, on an annual basis in accordance with the Council's capital projects' governance arrangements.

Capital expenditure of less than £10,000 will be charged to revenue on the grounds of materiality.

3.3.1. Capital projects - approvals are sought on an individual project basis and reflect the total cost of each project rather than the anticipated expenditure in each year.

3.3.1.1. A Business Case must be prepared for all capital proposals before approval is sought for inclusion in the Capital Programme. The Business Case will be in a format to support decision making, and must identify whole life costs, for revenue and capital. The amount of detail will be proportionate to the value and level of risk. Where there is a greater risk further detail in the Business Case may also be required.

3.3.1.2. Any 'in year' approval sought to vary the financial values or implications of a capital scheme, must be supported by an update to the Business Case.

3.3.1.3. Once the Capital Programme has been approved, project owners must ensure that the scheme is appropriately managed to achieve appropriate Time, Quality and Cost measures in accordance with the business case. This could be supported by production of a more detailed Business Case outlining how the Project or Programme will achieve the associated benefits.

3.3.1.4. Project owners must provide regular reporting of progress of their schemes to the relevant committee. Where project performance or outcomes are at risk of significantly varying from the business case the project owner is responsible for taking appropriate mitigating action including the need to seek appropriate approvals as required. All reporting

and monitoring activity should be evidenced and recorded in a way that can be accessed to support auditing of project activity. Guidance should be sought from the Director of Finance if required.

3.3.1.5. Council will approve the re-profiling of spend on approved capital schemes across financial years and carry forward of slippage/accelerated spend into financial years as part of the budget monitoring/setting processes.

3.3.2. Financing of capital expenditure

The Director of Finance will determine the financing of the capital programme, taking into consideration the availability of reserves and balances, funding from other bodies and the affordability of borrowing.

3.3.3. Capital Receipts

3.3.3.1. The Director of Finance must be informed of all proposed capital receipts including sales of land and buildings so that the effect on financial and property management can be assessed.

3.3.3.2. On the advice of the Director of Finance, the Council will determine how capital receipts will be applied when setting the budget. Schools capital receipts are ring-fenced and thus can only be used in a prescribed manner.

3.4. Reserves

3.4.1. The Director of Finance is responsible for advising on the prudent levels of reserves for the Council. The key controls are:

3.4.1.1. to maintain reserves in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and agreed accounting policies,

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3.4.1.2. for each reserve established, the purpose, usage and basis of transactions should be clearly identified

3.4.1.3. reserves are used only for the purpose for which they were intended

3.4.2. Authorisation to establish and add to a reserve is by the appropriate Chief Officers in conjunction with the Director of Finance and authorisation to incur expenditure against the reserve is by the appropriate Chief Officer.

3.5. Leasing, Rental and Right of Use Agreements

3.5.1. Leasing, rental or hire purchase agreements must not be entered into unless the service has established that they do not constitute a charge against the Council's prudential borrowing limits. All lease type arrangement must comply with IFRS 16 and be approved by the Director of Finance.

3.6. Internal trading activities

3.6.1. The requirements for a service to be designated as a trading activity include:

- provision of all, or the majority, of their services in an environment where their customers have the option to use them or an alternative service provider; and
- charging for the full cost of the goods / services they provide, on the basis of an agreed charge or rate.

3.6.2. Services are only permitted to operate as a trading activity with the prior approval of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Finance officer and the Monitoring officer.

3.6.3. Trading activities are each required to:

3.6.3.1. maintain a Trading Account into which all expenditure related to the provision of their services will be charged (i.e. including direct costs, the full costs of services provided by the Council's support services, any service management provided by senior managers and asset and other accounting charges).

3.6.3.2. receive all income due for work done by the trading activity. Exceptions to the requirement for a Trading Accounts will apply when the Service funded is occasional and below a limit value set by the Director of Finance.

3.6.3.3. balance their budget by generating sufficient income to cover the full costs of service provision.

3.6.3.4. operate within the Council's overall arrangements and rules for personnel and resource management. Council may approve special arrangements in exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that adherence to these rules and arrangements would lead to the unit becoming uncompetitive and losing work and that the proposed departure does not expose the Council to significant risk.

4. Risk Management and Control of Resources

4.1. Risk management

4.1.1. It is essential that robust, integrated systems are developed and maintained for identifying, evaluating and managing all significant operational risks to the Council. This is because risk management is an integral part of decision making and good governance as detailed in the guidance from Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for example Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (Governance Framework) (CIPFA and Solace, 2016). There should therefore be the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services across the Council.

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4.1.2. The Council has adopted a Risk Management Policy and Strategy which has been approved by Policy and Resources Committee and is regularly updated to ensure its continuing effectiveness on a continuous basis.

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4.1.3. Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring the Risk Management Policy and Strategy is implemented and that the Risk Management framework operates within their Service. Risk Management should be embedded throughout the organisation at both a strategic and an operational level, through integration into existing systems and processes.

4.1.4. There are several levels of risk register within the Council. There should be a movement of risks both upwards and downwards through the levels and treatment addressed at the most appropriate level of the organisation including:

4.1.4.1. Corporate Risk Register - contains risks impacting on the organisation's overall objectives. The Corporate Risk Register should be reviewed, and updated where necessary, quarterly by Chief Officers and provided to Senior Leadership Team and Policy and Resources Committee for approving.

4.1.4.2. Departmental/Directorate Risk Registers - contain strategic and operational risks with the potential to impact on the delivery of Departmental/Directorate objectives. These should be reviewed, and updated where necessary, at least quarterly, by Directorate Management Teams.

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4.1.4.3. Service/Team Risk Registers – contain operational risks with the potential to impact on the delivery of service or team priorities and act as a feeder for risks to be elevated to the Departmental/Directorate Risk Register. These risk registers should also be reviewed/updated on a quarterly basis and shared with the Directorate Management Team to update the Directorate Risk Register and the Risk Team.

4.1.4.4. Programme/Project Risk Register – contain risks associated with delivery of individual projects, managed and reported via the Programme Office and escalated to Senior Leadership Team and/or Departmental/Directorate Risk Register. A copy of the risk register should be provided to the Risk Team.

4.1.5. The Director of Finance has strategic responsibility for preparing the Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy, and for promoting it throughout the Council to ensure effective management and monitoring of risks. The Risk Team is responsible for providing advice support and guidance to teams across the Council.

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4.1.6. The Audit and Risk Management Committee are responsible for considering the effectiveness of the system of risk management arrangements and should therefore receive regular assurance reports on the implementation of risk management across the Council.

4.1.7. As part of the assurance arrangements a regular internal audit of risk management, at least every two years, should be undertaken to provide an accurate assessment on the design and effectiveness of the risk management framework. As the Head of Risk and Compliance is operationally responsible for both risk management and internal audit there is an independence impairment with the audit being carried out by the Wirral Internal Audit Team. In alignment with the Global Internal Audit Standards for UK Public Sector the review will not be undertaken by the Wirral Internal Audit Team but should be undertaken by another Local Authority or other external competent external provider including insurers.

4.1.8. Business Continuity - The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to maintain plans for the continuation of services in the event of an emergency, as far as is reasonably practicable.

4.1.9. The Director of Finance is responsible for developing the Business Continuity Strategy which is approved by the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to ensure the continuity of service delivery in the event of a disruptive incident. This is managed via the development of robust Business Continuity Plans which are regularly maintained and tested in accordance with the Business Continuity Strategy. This extends to those Council services provided by third parties and the ongoing monitoring and compliance with this requirement via contract performance management.

4.1.10. Internal Controls

4.1.10.1. The Director of Finance is responsible for advising on effective systems of internal control. These arrangements need to ensure compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations, and other relevant statements of best

practice. They should ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and used economically, efficiently, and in accordance with the statutory and other authorities that govern their use.

4.1.10.2. It is the responsibility of Senior Leadership Team to establish sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations in order to achieve best value, continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and for achieving their financial performance targets.

4.1.10.3. The Council must, on an annual basis, produce an Annual Governance Statement. This statement must provide a description of the system of internal control within the Council, a description of any work undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the internal control framework, and any significant internal control weaknesses.

4.2. Audit arrangements

4.2.1. Internal Audit - the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to have a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of ifs functions; the achievement of its aims and objectives; ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and includes effective arrangements for risk management.

4.2.1.1. To contribute to the production of the Annual Governance Statement, the Head of Risk & Compliance, is responsible for planning and delivering a programme of independent review of the Council's activities, the scope of the programme being based on the Council's objectives and an assessment of the risk which may affect the achievement of these objectives.

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4.2.1.2. The Head of Risk & Compliance will present an annual report to the Audit and Risk Management Committee, summarising the audit plans for the coming year and a commentary on audit activity which is completed or in progress, with regular reports setting out progress against the annual audit plan. In addition, any matters of material importance in relation to audit matters are also reported to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

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4.2.1.3. Internal Audit staff have, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, (with strict accountability for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information), full, free and unrestricted access to any and all of the Council's premises, personnel, assets, records and third-party fund transactions pertinent to conducting any engagement, including those of the Council's alternative service delivery vehicles. These rights of access should be documented in the management agreement.

4.2.1.4. With regards to organisations participating in partnering arrangements, Internal Audit staff shall have such access to the premises, personnel assets and records of the partner as is necessary for the purposes of the partnering arrangement, as detailed in section 6 below. Partners will be required to grant reasonable access when requested and details of such access should be agreed with the partner and set down in the Partnering Agreement. Where the right of access has not been specified in existing arrangements then appropriate discussions with partners should take place.

4.2.2. External Audit

4.2.2.1. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 established new arrangements for the audit and accountability of relevant authorities. Under these new arrangements the Council has opted for its external auditors to be appointed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA), an independent company established by the LGA for this purpose.

4.2.2.2. The Council may, from time to time, be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies such as HM Revenue and Customs, who have statutory rights of access.

4.3. Preventing Fraud and Corruption

4.3.1. The Council has an approved Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy which places responsibility for preventing fraudulent activity with all Members, Managers and individual members of staff. Any matters which involve, or are thought to involve, any fraud or other significant irregularity involving Council assets or those of a third-party fund, must be notified immediately to the Head of Risk & Compliance, in conjunction with other officers detailed in the Council's Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

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4.3.2. Other policies and arrangements in place to support the prevention of fraud and corruption are:

- Conflict of interests' policy
- Gift and Hospitality policy
- Whistle-blowing policy
- Code of Conduct
- Anti-Money Laundering policy
- Anti-bribery policy

4.3.3. In addition, all members of staff are required to regularly complete and refresh their level of governance training.

4.4. Insurance

4.4.1. The Council is responsible for ensuring that adequate proper insurance arrangements exist.

4.4.2. The Director of Finance is responsible for advising the Council on proper insurance cover and managing the Council's insurances.

4.4.3. The settlement of insurance claims against the Council is subject to the following approval limits (in conjunction with the insurer in line with policy excess thresholds):

- up to and including £25,000 – Senior Insurance Officer
- in excess of £25,000 but no more than £100,000 – Insurance Risk & Continuity Manager,
- in excess of £100,000 but no more than £250,000 – Head of Risk & Compliance (if damages only then likely involvement of insurer at this stage as well as total claim likely to exceed excess),
- in excess of £250,000 but no more than £1 million - Assistant Director Finance and Investment (in conjunction with insurer as casualty policy excess is £250,000)
- in excess of £1m but no more than £2.5m- Director of Finance (in conjunction with insurer as casualty policy excess is £250,000)
- in excess of £2.5m – Policy and Resources Committee

4.4.4. The Director of Finance will notify Audit and Risk Management Committee if the total value of claims during a financial year exceeds £2.5m for any of the following classes of claim:

- Employer liability
- Public liability (highways)
- Public liability (non-highways)
- Property
- Motor
- Other

4.4.5. Chief Officers must comply with all relevant insurance terms and conditions, and:

4.4.5.1. Notify the Director of Finance officer immediately of any loss, liability or damage that may lead to a claim against the Council

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4.4.5.2. Notify the Director of Finance officer promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles that require insurance and of any alterations affecting existing insurances

4.4.5.3. Consult the Director of Finance officer and the Monitoring Officer on the terms of any indemnity that the Council is proposing to give

4.4.5.4. Ensure that employees, or anyone covered by the Council's insurances, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment of liability in respect of any insurance claim

4.4.5.5. Ensure all officers are aware of their responsibilities relating to the use of insurance policies

4.4.5.6. Identify and report to the Director of Finance officer and Monitoring Officer any changes which could affect risks insured by the Authority

4.4.5.7. Ensure that any conditions affecting insured risks are met and departmental actions do not invalidate any claims

4.5. Assets

In the context of these Rules, Assets include buildings, land and infrastructure, furniture, equipment, plant, stores, cash balances and "intellectual property" such as computer software, data and information of all kinds.

All staff have a responsibility for safeguarding the Council's assets and information, including safeguarding the security of the Council's computer systems and paper records, and for ensuring compliance with the Council's computer and internet security policies.

4.5.1. The Head of Facilities Management will undertake the role of 'corporate landlord' and will ensure that:

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4.5.1.1. the proper security and maintenance of all premises occupied and/or owned by the Council

4.5.1.2. Record Management hold the title deeds for all Council properties

4.5.2. Chief Officers are responsible for:

4.5.2.1. the care, control and proper and economical use of all assets used in connection with the operation and delivery of their Services. Proper records should be maintained for these assets, together with appropriate arrangements for their management and security.

4.5.2.2. ensuring that assets are used only for official purposes and that all appropriate rights, licenses and insurances are obtained.

4.5.2.3. ensuring that all computer software used is properly licensed

4.5.3. The Director of Finance is responsible for the maintenance of a corporate register of the Council's property, plant and equipment assets.

4.5.4. Land and property

4.5.4.1. Land and property transactions include:

- freehold acquisitions and disposals
- long leasehold acquisitions and disposals
- short leases as tenant and as landlord
- entering into section 106 agreements as landowner
- release of covenants
- compulsory acquisitions and land compensation claims
- taking and granting easements
- option Agreements
- lease surrenders and exit agreements (including dilapidations).

4.5.4.2. Each of these transactions has a financial consequence for the Council and the following approvals are required:

- up to and including £100,000 – Head of Facilities Management
- more than £100,00 but no more than £500,000 – relevant Committee (in consultation with the Director of Finance)
- in excess of £500,000 – Policy and Resources Committee

Deleted: Senior Manager Asset

4.5.5. Inventories

4.5.5.1. Heads of Service must ensure that proper arrangements are made to maintain inventories of all valuable and transportable items, including vehicles, furniture, computer and other equipment (including software), visual aids, expensive tools and sports equipment.

4.5.5.2. The inventory must be updated for all acquisitions and disposals and checked at least annually. Items acquired under leasing arrangements must be separately identified for disclosure in the published final accounts.

4.5.6. Stock is defined as consumable items constantly required and held by a Service in order to fulfil its functions. Heads of Service are responsible for the control of stocks. They must ensure that stocks are appropriately

secured and recorded, do not exceed reasonable requirements and that all significant stock is accounted for in the year end accounts. Stocks should be checked at least once a year, more frequently in the case of expensive and/or security-controlled items such as cheques.

4.5.7. Cash held on any Council premises should be held securely and should not exceed any sums for which the Council is insured. If retention of cash on site is unavoidable in exceptional circumstances, the Head of Service is responsible for making appropriate security arrangements. All cash should be banked as quickly as possible.

4.5.8. Asset Disposal/Write-off

4.5.8.1. Chief Officers (in consultation with the Director of Finance) may authorise the write off of losses or disposal of assets (excluding land and property) up to and including £50,000. Activity in excess of £50,000 will require approval as follows:

- Inventory – Policy and Resources Committee
- Assets (excluding land and property) more than £50,000 but no more than £500,000 – relevant Committee (in consultation with the Director of Finance)
- Assets (excluding land and property) in excess of £500,000 – Policy and Resources Committee

4.5.8.2. Land and property disposals up to and including £100,000 may be authorised by the Head of Facilities Management unless the value of the Councils interest or sale proceeds are less than the book value in which case approval must be sought from the Policy and Resources Committee.

Disposals in excess of £100,000 require approval as follows:

- More than £100,000 but no more than £500,000 – relevant Committee (in consultation with the Director of Finance)
- In excess of £500,000 – Policy and Resources Committee

4.5.8.3. Any write off which arises as a result of theft or fraud must be notified to the Head of Risk & Compliance immediately.

4.5.9. Treasury Management

4.5.9.1. The Council has adopted CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

4.5.9.2. The full Council is responsible for approving the Treasury Management Strategy. The Director of Finance has delegated responsibility for

Deleted: Senior Manager Asset

Deleted: Audit and

implementing and monitoring the approved policy and practice (without financial limit).

4.5.9.3. All money in the hands of the Council is controlled by the Director of Finance.

4.5.9.4. The Director of Finance is responsible for reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee periodically in each financial year on treasury management activities undertaken within delegated powers.

Deleted: r

4.5.10. Investments and Borrowings - it is the responsibility of the Director of Finance to:

4.5.10.1. ensure that all investments of money are made in the name of the Council or in the name of approved nominees.

4.5.10.2. ensure that all securities that are the property of the Council or its nominees and the title deeds of all property in the Council's ownership are held in safe custody

4.5.10.3. effect all borrowings in the name of the Council.

4.5.10.4. act as the Council's registrar of stocks, bonds and mortgages and to maintain records of all borrowing of money by the Council.

4.5.11. Trust Funds and Funds Held for Third Parties - it is the responsibility of the Director of Finance to:

4.5.11.1. arrange for all trust funds to be held, wherever possible, in the name of the Council (e.g. 'Wirral Borough Council on behalf of…..'). All officers acting as trustees by virtue of their official position shall deposit securities, etc. relating to the trust with the Director of Finance unless any deed otherwise provides.

4.5.11.2. arrange, where funds are held on behalf of third parties, for their secure administration, approved by the Director of Finance, and to maintain written records of all transactions.

4.5.11.3. ensure that trust funds are operated within any relevant legislation and the specific requirements for each trust.

4.5.12. Intellectual Property

Intellectual property is a generic term that includes inventions and writing. If an employee creates these during employment then they belong to the Council, not to the employee.

Like any assets, intellectual property is an essential factor in ensuring business continuity within the Council, and the effective delivery of Council services. It is critical therefore, that the Council puts in place adequate controls over the ownership, storage and use of all intellectual property.

Chief Officers will ensure that their staff are aware of the Council's rights about intellectual property. Instances where intellectual property has been (or may be) created which has, or may have, commercial value to the Council should be referred to the relevant Officer(s).

4.6. Staffing

Council staff are an essential part of providing the highest level of quality services. Staff are the greatest single item on which the Council spends its budget. It is therefore crucial that procedures and guidance issued by Human Resources are followed precisely. In order to provide the highest level of service, it is crucial that the Authority recruits and retains high calibre, knowledgeable staff, qualified to an appropriate level within the resources available.

4.6.1. The Head of Paid Service is responsible for providing overall management to staff and is also responsible for ensuring that there is proper use of evaluation or other agreed systems for determining the remuneration of a job. The Assistant Director of Human Resources acts as an advisor to Chief Officers on areas such as national insurance, pension contributions and HR policy.

4.6.2. Chief Officers have primary responsibility for their establishment and are accountable for compliance with establishment and financial controls. Chief Officers are responsible for:

4.6.2.1. ensuring that positions are only created as new requirements and associated funding

4.6.2.2. that all changes to staffing levels are communicated to Human Resources as soon as possible to ensure financial and operational records are kept up to date

4.6.2.3. for instructing Human Resources and for providing appropriate and accurate information to enable the prompt and accurate payment of travelling, subsistence and other expenses where applicable

4.6.3. The Director of Finance will:

4.6.3.1. advise Chief Officers on areas such as national insurance and pension contributions, as appropriate. I ensure that budget provision exists for all existing and new Officers and prepare an annual staffing budget for services, in consultation with Chief Officers and ensure it is an accurate forecast of staffing levels.

4.6.3.2. ensure arrangements for payment to the appropriate bodies, of all statutory taxation and other payroll deductions

4.7. Third Party Funds are defined as any fund financed other than by the Council, controlled wholly or partly by a member of the Council's staff in connection with the clients, establishments or activities of the Council such as School Funds, Amenity Funds or Criminal Injuries Compensation Payments for children in care.

4.7.1. Money or goods belonging to the Third-Party Fund must be kept completely separate from other money or goods belonging to the Council. Similarly, completely separate records must be kept of the money or goods involved.

4.7.2. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that any Third-Party Funds controlled by Council staff are:

4.7.2.1. maintained separately and correctly in accordance with these Finance Regulations; and

4.7.2.2. subject to the same standards of stewardship and probity as Council funds.

4.8. Retention of records

4.8.1. The Returning Officer will be responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records and for reconciliation with regard to elections accounts.

4.8.2. The Council, in common with other public and private organisations, has certain statutory obligations it has to meet for the retention of its records. It also has to fulfil the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs, other legislative requirements and the external auditors in respect of its financial records.

4.8.3. The majority of financial records must be kept for 6 years from the end of the tax year to which they relate. Some records, however, may need to be kept for longer periods e.g. if required to defend future insurance claims. It is possible others can be destroyed within shorter periods. Guidance on the appropriate retention period is given in the Council's Corporate Record Retention Policy.

4.8.4. All records held should have an appropriate retention period assigned to them, which meet the statutory obligations to retain financial records, but also considers legislative requirements such as the Limitation Act, GDPR, Data Protection Act; Freedom of Information requirements; and the business needs of the Service.

5. Financial Systems and Procedures

5.1. Banking Arrangements

5.1.1. All bank accounts must be titled impersonally in the name of Wirral Borough Council.

5.1.2. Subject to any directions given by the Council, all arrangements with the Council's bankers must be made solely through the Director of Finance. No bank accounts may be opened, or arrangements made with any other bank except by agreement with the Director of Finance.

5.1.3. Bank transfers must be authorised by the Director of Finance, or those officers authorised to sign through the agreed local Scheme of Financial Delegation or in accordance with the Treasury Management Policy.

5.1.4. Direct debits can only be set up with the prior Approval of Finance in line with the local scheme of delegation for the Finance Directorate.

5.1.5. Payments must be authorised in line with local Schemes of Financial Delegation

5.1.6. Chief Officers must:

5.1.6.1. Make secure arrangements for the receipt of income and subsequent prompt banking

5.1.6.2. Adhere to the banking instructions issued by the Director of Finance

5.2. Income

5.2.1. The Director of Finance is responsible for developing and maintaining standards, procedures, systems and reports to facilitate the effective and efficient identification, collection, receipting, banking and recovery of income due to the Council.

5.2.2. Charges will be reviewed annually in line with the Fees and Charges Policy. The Fees and Charges Policy will be approved by Council as part of the annual budget setting process.

5.2.3. Council officers must comply with guidelines issued by the Director of Finance for the safe and efficient collection and recording of all money due to the Council.

5.2.4. Bad Debts

5.2.4.1. The Council has a Corporate Debt Policy with the guiding principle that customers have a responsibility to pay amounts that have been properly assessed as being due. The Council is committed to using the most appropriate and effective recovery methods available to it. In certain circumstances and for justifiable reasons it will be necessary to classify some debts as irrecoverable and to recommend that they be written off, however this does not preclude pursuit of the debt.

5.2.4.2. Chief Officers will critically review outstanding debts on a regular basis, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, and take prompt action to write off debts no longer deemed to be recoverable. Chief Officers will recommend to the Director of Finance all debts to be written off in line with the following approval limits:

- up to and including £10,000 – Budget Holder in consultation with the Director of Finance
- more than £10,000 – Policy and Resources Committee

5.2.4.3. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that an adequate provision for bad debt is made in the Council's accounts at year end and that contributions to this provision are included in budgetary projections and outturn reports. A record must be maintained for all debts written off.

5.3. Purchase of goods and services

5.3.1. The Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service are responsible for providing all appropriate information and instructions to Transactional Services to allow for prompt and accurate payment for goods and services provided and for the analysis of expenditure.

5.3.2. Except for purchases by Purchase Card, imprest accounts, periodic payments such as rent or rates, Grant payments, contributions made to other Public Sector Bodies and Subscriptions all purchases must be supported by an official requisition and purchase order unless previously agreed with the Head of Procurement.

5.3.3. All purchases must have regard to these Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules and local Schemes of Financial Delegation. Consideration must also be given to the requirements relating to key decisions. (Part 4, Section 2, paragraph 8 of the Constitution).

5.3.4. All requisitions and purchase orders must be authorised in accordance with the approved budget and the limits below to ensure that funds are available to pay for the purchase.

- up to and including £100,000 – Budget Holder
- more than £100,000 but less than £250,000 – Chief Officer
- more than £250,000 but less than £1.5m – Chief Officer in consultation with the Director of Finance
- more than £1.5m – relevant Committee

5.3.5. Heads of Service must ensure that there is adequate separation of duties in the raising and authorisation of requisitions, authorising of purchase orders, receipt of goods and authorisation of payments to creditors.

5.3.6. Heads of Service must consult the Director of Finance on appropriate arrangements for purchases of goods and services which cannot be accommodated within standard ordering and payment processes.

5.3.7. Payment of Invoices

5.3.7.1. All invoices must be sent directly by the creditor to the address stated on the official purchase order to enable prompt payment.

5.3.7.2. All invoices, as a minimum, must include the official purchase order number, the description of the goods or services provided, the quantity delivered, the delivery address, the date of the invoices and/ or date of delivery of the goods or services, the address and VAT registration number of the supplier and the price and VAT at the prevailing rate.

5.3.7.3. Invoices received without a valid purchase order number will be returned to the creditor as unauthorised for payment.

5.3.7.4. The Council's standard payment terms are 30 days from receipt of a correct invoice by BACS (Bankers Automated Clearing System). Alternative terms may not be negotiated or agreed with suppliers without the explicit approval of the Head of Procurement.

5.3.7.5. Payment will only be made for goods and services which have been formally receipted in accordance with receipting procedures set out by the Director of Finance.

5.3.8. Non-invoice Payments

5.3.8.1. Where Heads of Service wish to initiate a payment to a third party without a supporting invoice, an official request for payment must be submitted in a form approved by the Head of Procurement.

5.3.8.2. Any such requests must be authorised by an officer designated with an appropriate approval limit in the relevant local Scheme of Financial Delegation. They are responsible for ensuring that all payment details provided are accurate and that supporting records and documentation are available to substantiate the payment, including an official VAT receipt to allow for the reclaim of any VAT element.

5.3.8.3. Appropriately authorised requests for payment will be processed and paid by BACS.

5.3.8.4. Non-invoice payments should be requested on an exceptional basis only. Where payments of this type need to be made on regular basis Heads of Service must consider, in conjunction with the Head of Procurement, other alternative options which may be more appropriate.

5.3.8.5. Payments or reimbursements in respect of salaries and wages, travelling expenses or other employment allowances must be processed through the Payroll system and not treated as a non-invoice payment.

5.3.9. Purchase cards are an effective method of payment for goods and services of low value and for one off purchases. Heads of Service are responsible for the appropriate deployment and management of Purchase cards within their service in accordance with the local Scheme of Financial Delegation.

5.3.10. Imprest Accounts

5.3.10.1. Wherever possible, purchase cards will be used for low value transactions and where there are no mandated procurement contracts in place. However, in the limited circumstances when purchase cards cannot be used, the Director of Finance may provide bank imprest (petty cash) accounts to meet minor expenditure on behalf of the Council of up to £50 per transaction. Where circumstances require individual payments in excess of £50, approval to set-up a local arrangement must be sought from the Director of Finance.

5.3.10.2. Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that the rules of operation issued by the Director of Finance are adhered to, and that:

- local Schemes of Financial Delegation set out clearly the responsibilities and approval limits of individual officers in respect of these arrangements
- adequate records are maintained to allow for the verification and reconciliation of all payments made to the Council's general ledger and bank accounts, and to allow for the proper treatment of VAT
- arrangements are being operated for legitimate Council business only.

5.3.11. Local arrangements may not be used in any circumstances to circumvent either these Financial regulations or the Contract Procedure Rules.

5.4. Payment to Members

5.4.1. The Director of Law and Corporate Services will arrange for payments to Members entitled to claim allowances through selfserve, on receipt of the proper form, completed and certified in accordance with the approved scheme for allowances set out in Part 6 of the Constitution.

5.5. Taxation

5.5.1. The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant taxation regulations and guidance that affect the Council either directly, because of its own activities, or indirectly, because of service delivery through external partners.

5.5.2. The Director of Finance will ensure that:

5.5.2.1. proper arrangements are in place for the administration and accounting for taxation

5.5.2.2. timely completion of statutory returns as directed by HMRC e.g. VAT and PAYE

5.5.2.3. provision of up-to-date guidance for officers on taxation

5.6. Emergency payments

5.6.1. Emergency payments may arise because of unforeseen circumstances (e.g. as a consequence of a natural disaster, a civil emergency or a court order etc.) where budget provision has not been made and the payment cannot be covered within the relevant service's existing budget. Emergency payments can only be made in extenuating circumstances with the following approval:

- up to and including £250,000 – Chief Officers
- in excess of £250,000 but not more than £1m – Chief Executive or Director of Finance
- in excess of £1.5m – Policy and Resources Committee

5.6.2. Details of emergency payments made will be reported retrospectively to the Council

5.7. Transparency

To provide transparency in its stewardship of public funds the Council makes information available to the public in relation to its spending, regardless of value. Monthly payment transactions made via purchase card, employee expenses and accounts payable are available to download via the Council's website.

6. External Arrangements

6.1. Collaborative working

The term "collaborative working" covers a wide array of joint working arrangements. For the purposes of this section, the term "collaborative working" means working with one or more third parties collectively to achieve a shared objective. The Council's contribution to collaborative working may be capital, revenue or contributions in kind such as staff time.

Any collaboration which involves the creation of or participation in a separate legal entity (Alternative Service Delivery Vehicle (ASDV)), such as a limited company, trust or charity, must be set up and approved in accordance with these Financial Regulations and the governance arrangements as set out in Part 5, Section 8 of the Constitution (Governance of Council Interest in Companies).

6.1.1. Alternative Service Delivery Vehicles (ASDVs)

6.1.1.1. Any proposal to commission services via an alternative delivery model must be developed though the Council's business case governance framework, to ensure that there is a robust planning and decision-making process in place.

6.1.1.2. Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring that the Council's governance framework is followed through all stages of the business case development and decision-making process, and that specialist advice is sought from relevant key stakeholders across the Council, at each stage in the development of the business case. Key stakeholders will include:

- Finance
- Legal and Assurance (including Monitoring Officer)
- Internal Audit and Risk
- Merseyside Pension Fund, (if in respect of pension arrangements), and
- any other Chief Officers having an interest or in a position to contribute.

6.1.1.3. Chief Officers are also responsible for ensuring that Council approval is obtained before any contract negotiations and/or financial transactions

are entered into, and that all agreements and arrangements are properly documented, the content and format of which must be approved by the Monitoring Officer and/or Director of Finance.

6.1.1.4. Detailed guidance on the requirements and responsibilities in relation to ADV's is given in Part 5, Section 8 of the Constitution (Governance of Council Interest in Companies).

6.1.2. Partnerships

Partnerships include any arrangements where the Council agrees to undertake, part fund or participate in a project with other bodies; either as a beneficiary of the project, or because the nature or status of the project gives the Council a right or obligation to support it. It does not include situations where the Council is simply providing funding without assuming any obligation or risk relating to delivery of the project in which case the Contract Procedure Rules cover the arrangement.

6.1.2.1. Forming of partnerships - The approval of both the Director of Finance and the Monitoring Officer must be obtained prior to the Council entering into any formal partnership agreement. The approval of the Director of Finance must also be obtained where it is proposed that the Council adopts the role of 'Accountable Body' for a partnership.

A partnership agreement must be produced which ensures that:

- legal status and financial viability of the arrangement are clearly established and acceptable
- Council's financial commitment to the partnership is quantified and that this can be accommodated within the existing budget provision
- financial and corporate governance arrangements in place for the partnership are robust, and acceptable from the Council's perspective
- the Council is not exposed to undue financial, legal or reputation risk as a consequence of its involvement in the partnership
- Council's own financial accounting and reporting requirements can be satisfied
- the arrangements for dispute resolution and for exiting the arrangement are identified

In addition, a performance monitoring framework must be established to ensure that the objectives of the partnership are met.

The Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for approving delegations and frameworks for all partnerships. Partnerships must be approved by Council or the Strategic Leadership Team depending on the scale of the project and the local Scheme of Financial Delegation.

Chief Officers will ensure that:

- the approval of the Director of Finance officer and the Monitoring Officer is obtained prior to entering into a partnership agreement
- an appraisal is undertaken which demonstrates that the risks associated with the arrangement are minimal, or that appropriate arrangements are in place to mitigate any such risks
- the partnership agreement and arrangements will not impact adversely upon the services provided by the Council or upon its finances
- the proposed financial contribution by the Council to the partnership can be met from existing budget provision
- Council approval is secured for all delegations and frameworks for the proposed partnership.

6.1.2.2. Delegation of budget to a partnership - the delegation of budget to a partnership (whether the arrangement is binding on the parties or not), where money is normally spent in accordance with the wishes of a group of individuals or organisations, is subject to approval as follows:

- less than £100,000 – Chief Officer
- £100,000 and above but no more than £1m – Relevant Committee (in consultation with Director of Finance)
- more than £1m – Policy and Resources Committee

6.1.2.3. Financial Administration - where the Council is the 'accountable body' for the Partnership these Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules and all other relevant policies and procedures will apply.

6.2. Bidding for Grant Funding

6.2.1. All grant bids are subject to the requirements of the Revenue and Capital Grants Central Repository and Approval Process and any additional requirements in local Schemes of Financial Delegation.

6.2.2. All grant bids must be approved as set out in 6.2.3 before commencing any spend.

6.2.3. Grant approvals must be sought as follows:

- Revenue Grants up to and including £100,000 – Chief Officer
- Revenue Grants more than £100,00 – Chair of Change Advisory Board (CAB)
- Capital Grants – Senior Leadership Team (SLT) overseas all Capital Grant bids regardless of value

6.2.4. The receipt of grant income and related expenditure is subject to these Financial regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.

6.3. Support to other organisations

6.3.1. Grants, donations and contributions may be made in accordance with these Financial Regulations subject to there being adequate provision in service budgets and the appropriate approvals being sought.

6.3.2. Loans to third parties - loans may be provided by the Council to third parties in line with the following circumstances and approval limits:

6.3.2.1. Monies invested with banks and other financial institutions – to be undertaken in line with the Treasury Management Strategy

6.3.2.2. Loans to third parties for the purpose of financing expenditure which, if incurred by the Council, would constitute capital expenditure – to be undertaken in line with the Capital Programme approval process

6.3.2.3. Loans to third parties for other purposes (e.g. where a service is delivered by an ASDV and the provider seeks an up-front payment to support cash flows):

- Up to and including £50,000 - Chief Officer (in consultation with the Director of Finance)
- More than £50,000 but no more than £500,000 – relevant Committee (in consultation with the Director of Finance)
- £500,000 and above – Policy and Resources Committee

7. Financial limits

Whilst financial limits may have been referred to in the relevant sections of these Financial Regulations, all approval limits have been brought together in this section for ease of reference.

7.1. Revenue budget virements

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Up to and including £100,000	Chief Officer in consultation with the Budget Holder	Part 4, Section 3 Budget and Policy Framework (paragraph 6)
In excess of £100,000 but no more than £500,000 (cumulatively up to £1,000,000 over the financial year) provided that there is no virement of revenue budget between 'Directorates' (Budget Heads)	Relevant Committee in consultation with the Chief Officer	
In excess of £500,000	Policy and Resources Committee	

7.2. Capital expenditure

De-minimis	Constitution
Capital expenditure will be charged to revenue on the grounds of materiality if it is less than £10,000	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 3.3)

7.3. Settling insurance claims

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Up to and including £25,000	Senior Insurance Officer	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 4.4.3)
In excess of £25,000 but no more than £100,000	Insurance Risk & Continuity Manager	
In excess of £100,000 but no more than £250,000	Head of Risk & Compliance (if damages only then likely involvement of insurer at this stage as well as total claim likely to exceed excess)	
In excess of £250,000 but no more than £1m	Assistant Director of Finance (in conjunction with insurer as casualty policy excess is £250,000)	
In excess of £1m but no more than £2.5m	Director of Finance (in conjunction with insurer as casualty policy excess is £250,000)	

Deleted: Liability Claims

Deleted: 0

Deleted: 0

Deleted: 5

Deleted: Assistant Director Finance and Investment

Deleted: In excess of £150,000 but no more £1.5m

Deleted: (in consultation with Insurance Manager)

In excess of £2.5m	Policy & Resources Committee	

Deleted: 1

Deleted: Audit and Risk Management Committee

7.4. Land and property transactions

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Up to and including £500,000	Senior Manager for Asset Management	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 4.5.4)
In excess of £500,000	Policy and Resources Committee	

7.5. Disposal of assets

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Up to and including £10,000	Head of Service (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 4.5.8)
In excess of £10,000 but no more than £50,000	Chief Officer (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	
In excess of £50,000 but no more than £100,000	Relevant Committee (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	
In excess of £100,000	Policy and Resources Committee	

7.6. Write-offs

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Inventory:		
Up to and including £10,000	Budget Holder (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 4.5.8.1)
In excess of £10,000 but no more than £50,000	Chief Officer (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	
More than £50,000	Policy and Resources Committee	
Bad Debts:		
Up to and including £10,000	Budget Holder (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 5.2.4.2)
More than £10,000	Policy and Resources Committee	

7.7. Purchasing

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Up to and including £100,000	Budget Holder	Part 3, Section C Scheme of Financial Delegation of Authority to Officers (paragraph 2(a)) and Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 5.3.4)
In excess of £100,000 but no more than £250,000	Chief Officer	
In excess of £250,000 but no more than £1.5m	Chief Officer (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	
More than £1.5m	Relevant Committee	

7.8. Emergency Payments

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Up to and including £250,000	Chief Officer	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 5.6.1)
In excess of £250,000 but no more than £1m	Chief Executive or Director of Finance	
More than £1m	Policy and Resources Committee	

7.9. Delegation of budget to a partnership

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Less than £100,000	Chief Officer	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 6.1.2.2)
£100,000 and above but no more than £1m	Relevant Committee (in consultation with Director of Finance)	
More than £1m	Policy and Resources Committee	

7.10. Grant funding bids

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Revenue:		
Less than £100,000	Chief Officer	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 6.2.3)
£100,000 and above	Chair of Change Advisory Board (CAB)	
Capital:		
All bids – no minimum	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 6.2.3)

7.11. Loans to third parties

Delegations	Responsible Officer(s) and/or Committee	Constitution
Less than £50,000	Chief Officer (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	Part 4, Section 5 Financial Regulations (paragraph 6.3.2.3)
£50,000 or more but less than £100,000	Relevant Committee (in consultation with the Director of Finance)	
£100,000 and above	Policy and Resources Committee	

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WIRRAL

COUNCIL

MONDAY 12 OCTOBER 2026

REPORT TITLE:	**APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON – AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**
REPORT OF:	**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval for the appointment of an Independent Person to the Audit and Risk Management Committee. The appointment of an Independent Member will ensure that the Council satisfies the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) Audit Committees, CIPFA's Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2022) and the Terms of Reference for the Committee as well as supporting the outcomes from the Redmond Independent Review (2020) into the Oversight of Local Audit and the Transparency of Local Authority Financial Reporting, supporting improvements in governance in this area.

The decision effects all wards and is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Council is recommended to approve the appointment of Darren Jones to the Audit and Risk Management Committee for a period of 2 years in an advisory and consultative non-voting role.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 To ensure that the Audit and Risk Management Committee is compliant with current best professional practice as detailed in the CIPFA Audit Committees, CIPFA's Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2022) and supports the outcomes of the Redmond Independent Review (2020) into the Oversight of Local Audit and the Transparency of Local Authority Financial Reporting

1.2 To ensure that the Audit and Risk Management Committee is operating in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Council may resolve not to appoint the candidate as an Independent Member to the Audit and Risk Management Committee. This, however, would mean that the Committee would continue to operate without an independent member and therefore fail to comply with best professional practice until such a time that a further recruitment exercise is undertaken to enable a future recommendation of appointment to Council.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Audit Committees are a key component of effective corporate governance. They are a key source of assurance about the organisation’s arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, and reporting on financial and non financial performance.

3.2 Suitably qualified and experienced independent member(s) serving on Audit Committees can bring specialist knowledge and insight to the workings and deliberations of the committee which, when partnered with elected members' knowledge of working practices and procedures, ensure:

- An effective independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework
- Independent review of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance.
- Independent challenge to and assurance over the Authority’s internal control framework and wider governance processes.
- Oversight of the financial reporting process.

3.3 The CIPFA Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2022) recommends the appointment of Independent Member(s) to public sector audit committees as best professional practice and that the injection of an external view can bring a new approach to committee discussions. The position statement identifies that independent members can bring the following benefits to an Audit Committee:

- Additional knowledge and expertise.

- Continuity of membership where elected member membership changed or affected by the electoral cycle.
- Reinforcement of political neutrality and independence.

3.4 The Redmond Independent Review into the Oversight of Local Audit and the Transparency of Local Authority Financial Reporting is supportive of actions being taken to improve the effectiveness of audit committees in the public sector and acknowledges the role of independent members in this.

3.5 The Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Management Committee includes provision that 'a person who is not a Member or officer of the Council who shall be a co-opted member of the Committee entitled to speak but not vote at meetings.'

3.6 A recruitment exercise has recently been completed by the Director of Corporate Services and Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Following an interview process with two shortlisted candidates, the Director of Corporate Services and Chair of the Committee concluded that Mr Darren Jones met the required skillset for an Independent Member to the Committee and it was therefore recommended that he be appointed.

3.7 Darren Jones is a Wirral resident with significant leadership, governance, financial planning and risk management experience over more than 20 years in a range of senior roles within private sector and commercial organisations, together with over a decade of leadership within the voluntary and community sector as a pastor of a local church. His career has involved responsibility for business planning, budgeting, forecasting, organisational change, performance management and risk oversight across large and complex operations including oversight of substantial budgets and major transformation programmes. He has extensive experience of analysing financial and operational information, challenging and scrutinising business performance, managing risk and providing advice and assurance to senior leaders and board-level stakeholders. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics and Computing. During the interview process, Mr Jones demonstrated a strong commitment to public accountability, objective decision-making and the wellbeing of Wirral residents through his professional and community leadership roles.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Independent Persons receive a payment of £60 for each meeting they attend and the payment for the use of their private motor vehicle to and from the meeting is made at the rate of 45p per mile.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There is no statutory requirement for an independent Member at this time, however it is in line with best professional guidance as set out in the report.

5.2 To comply with requirements of the Council's Constitution the appointment requires ratification by Full Council

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from the recommendation of the report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Potential failure of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to comply with best professional practice and thereby not function in an efficient and effective manner.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee was directly involved in the recruitment and interview process and decision, in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Services, to recommend that Darren Jones be appointed to the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Group Spokespersons on the Committee have been consulted on the exercise and a briefing note detailing the recruitment process and the successful candidates skills and experience was provided to all members of the Committee.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct environment, biodiversity or climate change implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising from this report.

12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Joe D'Henin,**
Senior Democratic Services Officer

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution
CIPFA Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2022)
Redmond Independent Review into the Oversight of Local Audit and the Transparency of Local Authority Financial Reporting

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by Council in accordance with Part 3(A) (2h) Functions Reserved to Council, "confirming the appointment of Independent Persons"

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
N/A	

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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 July 2026

Present:	Councillor	M Booth (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Ainsworth	H Cameron
		A Brame	P Jobson
		J Bird	J Stewart Laing
		S Foulkes	E Tomeny
		P Martin	V Wilson

15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

16 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

17 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. There were no declarations of interest.

18 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

19 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were nine public questions and eight public statements submitted to this meeting. No petitions or member questions had been received.

19.1 Public Questions

Anne Grimes, speaking on behalf of the Cleveland Arms and as a New Ferry resident, raised concerns regarding the treatment of New Ferry by the Council and expressed disappointment that the community appeared to be receiving a lower standard of investment than other areas of the borough. The Chair acknowledged the concerns raised and advised that comments would be taken into account during consideration of the New Ferry Scheme later in the meeting.

Simon Davies referred to the three options presented for the New Ferry Public Realm Scheme and questioned whether the recommendation for Option 2 had been driven primarily by cost considerations. He suggested that Option 1 would provide greater benefits to businesses through increased footfall, enhanced planting, superior materials and cultural features. In response, the Chair advised that all three options were considered high quality and deliverable within the available capital budget. However, officers had also assessed future maintenance requirements, revenue implications and construction impacts when formulating the recommendation. A supplementary question regarding the long-term durability of coloured surfacing compared with traditional paving was referred for a written response.

Lisa Woodworth, representing the Our Patch Community Gardening Scheme, highlighted the willingness of local groups to assist with maintenance of planting and public spaces associated with the scheme. She also referred to the role that attractive public environments can play in reducing anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and vandalism. In response, the Chair stated that the investment in New Ferry was intended to have a positive impact on the community and noted that design considerations included improvements to lighting, CCTV provision and street furniture arrangements to help address anti-social behaviour concerns. A supplementary question regarding partnership working with local groups would receive a written response.

Claire Shields asked whether a full assessment had been undertaken of the long-term social, environmental and economic benefits of a higher-quality public realm scheme, including benefits to active travel, business growth, community pride and reductions in anti-social behaviour. It was explained that the wider regeneration benefits had previously been considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee when funding was approved and that all proposed options would represent an improvement on existing conditions.

Julian Priest questioned the Council's continued use of glyphosate-based weed treatment products and raised concerns regarding the inclusion of sulfosulfuron within the newly procured Nomix Dual product. He referred to the Council's climate emergency commitments and potential impacts on environmentally sensitive coastal habitats.

In response, the Chair advised that the Council remained committed to reducing glyphosate use and had undertaken a range of trials of alternative weed management methods over several years. However, alternatives had not yet proved sufficiently effective for highway weed management purposes. The new contract represented an attempt to reduce glyphosate use whilst maintaining service delivery. Officers were continuing to assess the effectiveness of the new product. A supplementary question concerning environmental assessments and protected habitats was referred for a written response.

David Brewer, Chairman of Wirral Cycling Group, asked what specific actions the Council was taking to maintain highways for cyclists and referred to guidance produced by Cycling UK. The Chair outlined the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Highways Act and the risk-based inspection and maintenance regime undertaken by the authority. In response to the supplementary question, officers undertook to provide a detailed written response addressing the specific points raised within the Cycling UK document.

David Hill, Coordinator of Wirral Cycling Group, highlighted the poor condition of the Frank Lewis Cycleway between Heswall and Thurstaston, citing surface deterioration and vegetation growth. The Chair advised that officers would provide a site-specific response following the meeting.

Jonathan Mitchell expressed concerns regarding increased traffic volumes and vehicle speeds on Bracken Lane following alterations to traffic movements associated with the Village Road scheme.

In response, the Committee was advised that before-and-after traffic surveys showed that approximately 1,532 daily vehicle movements previously used Village Road and that Bracken Lane had experienced an increase of approximately 588 vehicles per day. Officers advised that increases on surrounding routes would continue to be monitored and that any necessary safety interventions would be considered as part of the Council's annual review process.

The Head of Legal Services (Interim Monitoring Officer) read out a question on behalf of Phil Simpson, on behalf of the Pensioners Alliance Wirral, concerning proposals for a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing on Saughall Massie Road.

In response, officers advised that consultation was intended to gather local views and identify any site-specific concerns. Feedback received during the consultation exercise would be assessed alongside technical, traffic and road safety evidence before final decisions were made regarding the scheme.

19.2 **Statements and petitions**

Christopher Lee-Power made a statement in relation to item 6 on the agenda, “New Ferry Highways and Public Realm Scheme.” He expressed support for the highest-quality public realm option for New Ferry, arguing that the area deserved a landmark scheme reflecting the scale of its recovery since the 2017 gas explosion. He emphasised the importance of creating an attractive town centre capable of increasing footfall, supporting local businesses and encouraging future investment.

Slawomir Jelenski made a statement in relation to item 6 on the agenda, “New Ferry Highways and Public Realm Scheme.” He highlighted the strength of local feeling in favour of a more ambitious public realm scheme. He referred to consultation feedback and argued that the preferred option should reflect the aspirations of residents and traders. He stressed the importance of quality materials, landscaping and design features in creating a destination that people would want to visit and spend time in.

Mark Anthony Craig made a statement in relation to item 6 on the agenda, “New Ferry Highways and Public Realm Scheme.” He spoke about the regeneration benefits that could arise from enhanced public realm investment. He suggested that a high-quality environment would improve perceptions of New Ferry, support business growth and contribute to community wellbeing. He encouraged the Committee to view the scheme as a long-term investment rather than solely a maintenance consideration.

Tony Norbury made a statement in relation to item 6 on the agenda, “New Ferry Highways and Public Realm Scheme.” He referred to New Ferry's journey since the explosion and the efforts of local residents and community organisations to support the area's recovery. He stated that the community had waited many years for significant investment and believed that the scheme presented a unique opportunity to create a distinctive and attractive town centre environment.

Ann Grimes made a statement in relation to item 6 on the agenda, “New Ferry Highways and Public Realm Scheme.” She argued that New Ferry should receive a scheme of comparable quality to public realm projects delivered elsewhere in the borough. She highlighted the importance of civic pride and the positive impact that attractive public spaces can have on local businesses, residents and visitors. She urged Members to support the option that most closely reflected consultation responses.

Claire Shields in relation to item 6 on the agenda, “New Ferry Highways and Public Realm Scheme.” She spoke on the wider social, environmental and economic benefits of high-quality public realm investment. She argued that better landscaping, planting, public spaces and active travel infrastructure could help improve community wellbeing, reduce anti-social behaviour, support biodiversity and strengthen the local economy. She encouraged Members to consider the longer-term value of the investment.

Julian Priest made a statement in relation to item 8 on the agenda, “Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report 2025-26”. He raised concerns regarding the continued use of chemical weed control products, including the introduction of Nomix Dual. He questioned whether the approach was consistent with the Council's climate emergency and environmental commitments and called for greater consideration of alternative methods of weed management that reduced the use of herbicides.

Jillian Hawkins made a statement in relation to item 10, “Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Performance Report”. She highlighted road safety concerns on Teehey Lane, Higher Bebington, particularly in relation to vehicle speeds and the safety of pedestrians and other road users. She called for further investigation of potential measures to improve safety and reduce the risk of collisions in the area.

19.3 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions by Members.

20 **NEW FERRY HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC REALM SCHEME**

The Director of Capital Programmes and Assets brought forward a report which sought Committee approval for the design and delivery of a highways and public realm improvement scheme in New Ferry. This formed a key part of the Council’s regeneration delivery plan for the town centre and built on investment that had taken place since 2018.

Members were advised that the proposed improvements would enhance the condition, safety, accessibility and appearance of the pedestrianised section of Bebington Road and had been informed by consultation with residents, businesses, ward members and other stakeholders.

The Director explained that public consultation had demonstrated strong support for meaningful public realm improvements. However, aspirations for premium materials and bespoke design features had to be considered alongside affordability, deliverability and future maintenance liabilities.

The recommended option, Option 2, retained the principal benefits identified during consultation, including enhanced planting, seating, lighting, CCTV provision and measures to discourage inappropriate vehicle access. It also utilised materials considered easier and less costly to maintain over the longer term.

In making the recommendation, regard had been given to the Council's current financial position and recent external audit findings, which emphasised the importance of ensuring that regeneration activity was affordable and that long-term financial risks and liabilities were effectively managed.

Councillor Ann Ainsoworth moved and Councillor Steve Foulkes seconded the recommendations as set out within the report, in accordance with standing order 14 (F).

Councillor Jo Bird moved and Councillor Allan Brame seconded an amendment, in accordance with standing order 14 (H), as follows:

Replace paragraph one of the motion with "1. Proceed with Option 1 as summarised in Appendix 1 of the report" and retain paragraph two as set out in the officer report

Members then proceeded to debate the item.

Members raised the following questions/comments:

- Members noted the strong representations made by New Ferry residents, businesses and community groups
- Members questioned whether the recommendation for Option 2 had been driven primarily by future maintenance costs rather than consultation outcomes, and asked how officers had balanced public consultation feedback against affordability and maintenance considerations.
- Members queried the differences between Options 1, 2 and 3 in practical terms and what the public would notice once constructed
- Members requested clarification on the long-term maintenance implications of the specialist paving materials proposed within Option 1.
- Members asked about the availability of replacement materials and the impact of future utility company works on the appearance of the scheme.
- Members questioned whether maintenance costs had been quantified and how reliable the estimates were over the lifetime of the scheme.
- Members sought assurance that Option 2 would still deliver a high-quality public realm environment and not be perceived as a reduced scheme.

- Members commented on the importance of New Ferry's recovery following the 2017 explosion and the need to create a town centre that residents could be proud of.
- Members highlighted the opportunity to support local businesses through investment in a high-quality public realm.
- Members queried what lessons had been learned from recent public realm schemes elsewhere in the borough, particularly Birkenhead town centre.
- Members asked about the likely impact of construction works on local businesses and whether disruption would differ between the options.
- Members commented on the need to balance local aspirations against wider financial pressures facing the Council.

Officers advised that all three options could be delivered within the approved capital budget and would provide a significant improvement to the existing public realm. The recommendation for Option 2 was based on achieving an appropriate balance between regeneration aspirations, deliverability, affordability and long-term maintenance considerations.
Officers explained that Option 1 included specialist imported paving materials that would require longer procurement times, specialist installation and potentially more complex future repairs, particularly following utility works. Whilst precise long-term maintenance costs could not be predicted, officers considered Option 2 to present a lower operational and financial risk while still delivering the principal improvements sought through consultation, including enhanced planting, seating, lighting, CCTV provision and environmental enhancements.
Officers stressed that the recommendation was not a reflection of lower ambition for New Ferry, but rather a judgement that Option 2 offered the most sustainable solution when considering both the immediate capital investment and the ongoing responsibilities of maintaining the scheme over its lifetime.

The amendment to the recommendation was put to the vote. The amendment was lost (3:8).

The original recommendation was then put to the vote and it was,

Resolved:
That the Environment, Climate Change and Transport Committee authorises the Director of Capital Programmes and Assets to:

1. Proceed with Option 2 as summarised in paragraph 3.10 of the report.

2. **Approve a Task Order – NEC Option A with Cambrianway Limited via the existing Civil and Highway Engineering Term Service Contract to deliver the project, comprising public realm and highway improvements to the pedestrianised section and associated areas of Bebington Road, New Ferry, subject to agreement on cost and programme.**

21 **2026-27 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 1**

The Head of Finance (Place) presented the report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Committee as at Quarter 1 (30 June 26) of 2026/27. The report adopted a by-exception approach, focusing on the most significant forecast variances, delivery of budget savings, implementation of immediate in-year mitigations, and any issues which required further management action or Member attention.

Members were advised that whilst the Committee's own budget position was forecast to remain balanced, the wider Council was forecasting an adverse variance of approximately £3.794 million, largely attributable to pressures within Adult Social Care.

The report drew particular attention to:

- Risks associated with winter maintenance expenditure.
- Parking income trends.
- Cemeteries and crematorium income targets.
- Fleet service sustainability reviews.
- Potential tree maintenance pressures arising from severe weather events.
- Delivery of approved savings proposals.

Members requested additional information on Key Route Network funding allocations, developer contribution income, off-street parking income and public sector decarbonisation funding arrangements. Officers undertook to provide further details where required.

Resolved – That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee notes:

1. **the forecast revenue position for Quarter 1 as balanced;**
2. **the in-year efficiencies and corrective actions implemented to date, and the forecast financial benefit arising from those actions in 2026/27.**
3. **the progress on delivery of the 2026/27 savings programme at Quarter 1.**
4. **the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1,**
5. **The capital programme at Quarter 1**.

22 **CARBON BUDGET PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025-26**

It was agreed that the following two agenda items, “Carbon Budget Performance Report 2025-26” and “Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report 2025-26” would be taken together.

Introducing the Carbon Budget Performance Report, officers explained that operational emissions had reduced by approximately 61.7% compared with the baseline year. However, progress had slowed in recent years because easier and lower-cost carbon reduction opportunities had largely been exhausted.

Members were informed that:

- Buildings continued to represent the largest source of Council emissions.
- Significant reductions in fossil fuel use would be necessary to achieve net-zero ambitions.
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme projects would play an important role in future reductions.
- Future progress would depend heavily upon securing external funding and investment.
- Achieving net zero by 2030 would be increasingly challenging without additional intervention.

Introducing the Action Plan Progress Report, officers highlighted a number of achievements including:

- Award of National Lottery funding for the Thriving Communities Programme.
- Progress on public sector decarbonisation projects.
- Development of the Green Fleet Policy.
- Continued delivery of environmental education through the Eco Schools programme.
- Ongoing tree planting and biodiversity initiatives.

Members queried the downwards trend in carbon budget versus net annual emissions and the progression of electric vehicle infrastructure. Members also questioned the potential for further decarbonisation funding and estate management. They also raised queries regarding youth engagement, tree planting and flood management. Members asked for projections on the worst case scenario if net zero was not reached by its expected target.

Resolved - That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee notes the Council's performance and progress towards its target of carbon net zero by 2030.

23 **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2025-26**

It was agreed that the two agenda items, "Carbon Budget Performance Report 2025-26" and "Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report 2025-26" would be taken together.

Resolved – That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee:

1. **Notes the progress of the Environment & Climate Emergency actions undertaken in 2025-26; and**

2. **Endorses the priority actions for 2026-27 contained within section 6 of Appendix 1 of the report.**

24 **ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Director of Operations introduced a report which provided a performance report in relation to Environment and Climate Emergency, and Highways and Infrastructure. Members were advised that the report had been revised following feedback received during previous municipal years and was intended to provide clearer performance information against key objectives within the Committee's remit. The report included measures relating to highways maintenance, road safety, waste and recycling, environmental services, climate emergency activity and tree management.

The Director explained that the performance framework would continue to evolve in line with the developing Wirral Plan performance framework and national performance indicators.

Members raised the following questions/comments:

- Members requested more year-on-year trend data rather than reporting performance for a single period.
- Members asked whether tree survival rates were monitored and reported following planting programmes.
- Members sought additional information on dangerous tree response times and overall tree maintenance activity.

- Members welcomed the introduction of the food waste collection service, and asked how food waste collections would affect recycling performance figures and future reporting.
- Members requested future reports include food waste tonnages and their impact on residual waste levels.
- Members expressed concern about the number of people killed or seriously injured on Wirral's roads.
- Members requested more information on the underlying causes and contributory factors behind road traffic collisions, and questioned the use of terminology such as "acceptable" when describing casualty performance.
- Members raised concerns regarding the increasing use of e-bikes, particularly illegally modified e-bikes, and the implications for road safety, and asked whether incidents involving e-bikes were captured within existing performance measures.
- Members queried whether highway and transport performance was benchmarked against comparable authorities.
- Members requested additional context, trend analysis and benchmarking information in future reports and sought assurance that the performance framework would continue to evolve and remain meaningful for scrutiny purposes.

Officers advised that performance reporting would continue to be reviewed and developed in response to Members' feedback. Information relating to tree planting outcomes, tree survival rates, food waste collections and longer-term performance trends could be incorporated into future reports where appropriate. Officers acknowledged Members' concerns regarding road safety and confirmed that casualty data and emerging issues, including e-bike usage, would continue to be monitored. Benchmarking with comparable authorities was already undertaken and would continue to inform service improvement and performance assessment. Officers further explained that the Committee's performance framework would continue to evolve alongside the Wirral Plan and emerging national performance measures to ensure reports remained relevant, meaningful and informative.

Resolved – That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee notes the content of the report and highlights any areas requiring further clarification or action.

25 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee introduced the work programme.

Members requested the following additions/amendments to the work programme:

- A future workshop on road safety and walking to school
- Resumption of the regular Hot House briefings, to include the full committee
- Date requested for an item on pavement parking enforcement

It was agreed that items requested on weed treatment provisions would be a part of the Hot House briefings. Briefing notes had recently been circulated on road safety issues and it was advised that reports could be programmed where appropriate.

Resolved – That the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee notes the proposed Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 14 July 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Powell-Wilde (Chair)	
	Councillors	P Gilchrist	B Hall
		E Tomeny	C Walsh-McDonald
		C Povall	K Murphy
		G Cooper	G Bennett
		T Murphy	
Apologies	Councillors	G McManus	
		P Stuart	

18 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

19 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillor Grahame McManus who was substituted by Councillor Tony Murphy; and
Cllr Paul Stuart.

20 **MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

21 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

22 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public or member questions, statements or petitions were received.

23 **2026/27 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (THE PERIOD TO 30 JUNE 2026)**

The Head of Finance - People presented the report of the Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning which set out the financial monitoring information for the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee as at Quarter 1 of 2026/27 covering the period to 30 June 2026. At Quarter 1, the Adult Social Care and Public Health Directorate was forecasting an adverse year end variance of £4.838m against a net revenue budget of £180.4m. This represented an adverse variance of around 3 percent which was driven primarily by pressures within demand lead care budgets and particularly within Older People and Mental Health and Disability Services. Pressures persisted in Older People Services with a forecast adverse variance of £2.392m reflecting the pressures across nursing and residential care budgets. In nursing care, demand had increased compared to the same point last year. In residential care the pressure came from the increasing complexity of need and the additional support required within placement settings. Mental Health and Disability Services were also forecasting an adverse variance of £2.722m. The key pressures on supported living and residential care placements were driven by increased activity, higher placement costs and more complex needs. These pressures were partly offset by additional health income of £0.700m.

It was reported that the forecast adverse position was partially offset by a favourable variance of £0.426m in Delivery Services. This was largely due to employee budget underspends within day services, the vacancy freeze, reduced spend on supplies and services, in line with the wider spending freeze, and the temporary pause of the in-house transport solution while service redesign and transformation activity was progressed.

It was highlighted that the savings target for the Directorate was £2.805m and all of the savings were either delivered or on track to be delivered. No savings were rated red and no unmitigated shortfalls were forecast at this point. The actions taken to strengthen financial control and reduce the forecast overspend included tri-weekly budget efficiency meetings, strengthened schemes of delegation, tighter authorisation controls, increased joint working with the ICB and further work to maximise appropriate health funding contributions. There was also a focus on improving placement oversight, reviewing new client activity and monitoring lengths of stay and reviewing and increasing Shared Lives referrals. An operational checklist had been developed to ensure more consistent practice. These actions were intended to improve control, support timely decision making and mitigate the forecast position. Where operational efficiencies or corrective actions did not fully mitigate forecast adverse variances, use of the Council’s contingency budget would be considered at year-end.

Members queried the adverse amount of £2.392m for Older Peoples Services

and a detailed breakdown of all the different carelines in the total figure would be provided to this Committee. Members requested the value of the monthly median cost of care package and asked whether there was an action plan to reduce these costs. It was agreed that this information would be brought to the Budget Oversight Panel.

Members asked whether there was an agreed process between the Council and the NHS for the recovery of appropriate health funding contributions. The Director of Adults Health and Strategic Commissiong explained that there was a partnership between the NHS, in particular the Integrated Care Board and the Council. This improved relationship had enabled joint assessments and joint resolutions and decisions. There were still significant financial constraints on both the NHS and the Council and the ability to have the resources to carry out the reviews quicker to agree on the long-term needs of residents, was still being worked on. It was acknowledged that the ICB was going through significant change and their structure was changing. Members were reassured that care was provided without prejudice and everybody in the healthcare system would have their needs assessed and that care would be in place upon discharge. The balance of whether it was a health-related need or an adult social care issue would not impact on the care provided. Examples of the work around residential and nursing care would be brought to the Budget Oversight Panel.

It was clarified that co-production and working with people with lived experience was vital to the design and development of services. At the second Annual Conference of the Wirral Carer's Alliance in June 2026 there was joint work around the strategy with carers, parents and the people that the Council cares for were asked about how services should be shaped. The Direct Payments Service was being developed and improved to address the needs of residents.

Members queried whether different levels of residential care were provided in different settings. It was explained that in nursing care settings such as those for dementia, a higher level of complexity would be expected and the base rate cost of the weekly package would be higher. Young people were also coming through with high complexity and case studies would be looked at in the Budget Oversight Panel.

The Head of Finance – People clarified that £9.5m was built in to rebase the budget to take into account the pressures experienced.

The Chair asked about the additional measures that were being considered to close the budget gap in the 2026/2027 financial year and requested that future financial monitoring at the Budget Oversight Panel included the impact on residents and services.

Resolved – That

1. **The forecast revenue position for Quarter 1 of £4.838m (adverse) be noted.**
2. **The progress on delivery of the 2026/27 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted.**
3. **The forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1 be noted.**
4. **The capital position as at the end of Quarter 1 be noted.**

24 **CARE QUALITY COMMISSION SELF-ASSESSMENT**

The Assistant Director of Operational Delivery and Professional Standards presented the report of the Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning which set out Wirral's Self Assessment regarding the provision of Adult Social Care services. Notification was received from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 2 June 2026 that Wirral Adult Social Care would be subject to an assessment under the new CQC Framework. The process had commenced and would conclude with a site visit in August 2026. The previous CQC assessment was published in January 2025 and the Adult Social Care Department and their partners had continued to work hard to improve the outcomes and services for the residents of the Borough. There was a stepped reporting approach for those Local Authorities that were assessed as requires improvement by the CQC. In May 2026 the Department of Health and Social Care wrote to confirm that Wirral Council no longer needed to report to them in relation to the stepped approach due to the progress that had been made and Wirral Council would manage its own assurance going forward. CQC were concerned firstly with the progress since the last CQC assessment and secondly, people's experience in the last twelve months. The evidence submitted to the CQC included 50 quality assured cases, the latest self assessment and over 400 pieces of information required to evidence Wirral's position. Wirral were the first in the North West to be assessed under the new Adult Social Care Framework. The CQC assessment submission was in relation to four themed areas and nine quality statements.

Members asked about effectiveness of the work with people with lived experience and whether it produced the outcomes that people expected. In relation to safeguarding, the assessment referenced what outcomes people were seeking from that type of intervention. Staff identified the outcomes people were seeking and sought to understand their experience of the process and the intervention they were receiving. This information would be reviewed prior to making a decision about next steps for those individuals.

The staff survey was discussed by Members. Members sought assurance that the carer's assessment satisfaction, which was an independent national survey, would continue to improve. It was highlighted that there had been a significant increase in the number of carer assessments. The Carer's Alliance had worked very closely with the Carers' Partnership Board which was a

system wide board which included the Voluntary Community and Faith sector and the NHS and partners to ensure that carers were reached more effectively. Practice had been co-produced for staff who were meeting with carers.

The delivery of services within the statutory timescales was queried by Members. It was clarified that the Front Door redesign had helped to manage the timeliness of responses and the number of people reaching a conclusion within 28 days of first contact had increased from 82 percent to 90 percent in the last year.

It was noted that the DoLS waiting list had reduced and Members asked how near Wirral was to completing the assessments within the statutory timeframe. Recruitment was taking place for Wirral Council's enhanced DoLS service. It was expected that a statutory change to the DoLS framework would change the criteria for a DoLS and the eligibility for it but legal clarification was awaited around some aspects of how that would happen.

It was clarified that the measures put in place to increase the uptake of Direct Payments included ensuring that people understood Direct Payments and knew how to apply. There was also a cultural change among staff who recognised the benefits and applied Direct Payments as a first offer. In addition, there was a revised offer in terms of the service provider who supported people who had Direct Payments in place. The process had been revised and improved following an end-to-end process review.

Members queried whether the loss of key staff was a risk to the service. It was clarified that staff retention was good, people felt supported and there was a strong apprenticeship programme.

It was explained that face to face contact points had been put in place and meetings with a social worker were available for people who were digitally excluded. This had been supported by a Public Health funded third sector party called Involve NorthWest.

It was highlighted that the addition of a Principal Occupational Therapist role had had a significant impact and an upstream prevention therapy lead model had helped people to stay in their homes. The improvement in Occupational Therapy waiting times was praised by Members. OT1 low level cases were seen within one week, OT2 complex but less urgent cases were seen within three months and the plan was to reduce this to two months. OT3 standard cases from low to medium were waiting up to three months and the plan was to reduce this to two months. The team were working on OT2 throughout July 2026 and OT3 during August 2026. The enhancement of the team size would assist in driving the improvement.

Members queried the percentage of people who were not informed of or did not yet have the outcome of raising a safeguarding concern. The reasons for this were discussed, including the increased complexity of complaints.

The Director of Adults Health and Strategic Commissioning clarified that complaints were acknowledged straightaway and the target was for the resolution of 70 percent of complaints within 25 days.

The Director of Adults, Care and Strategic Commissioning explained that the NHS 10 year plan set out that more care should be provided to people closer to where they live in their Neighbourhoods and the Neighbourhood Health Model guidance outlined the key changes that needed to be made. The Wirral Provider Alliance had helped to raise standards across Wirral and to ensure that there were no inequalities or gaps in accessing GP care. The aim was to identify the top 1-5 percent of people who were likely to need urgent emergency care and provide proactive planned care through the Neighbourhoods. This would commence in Autumn 2026 with the top 1 percent of people who were likely to be at most risk. It was estimated that there was a cost to the system of £22m per year for the top 1 percent of people. In the next year, the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board would start to influence a wellness and prevention model alongside the clinical pathway to ensure that more work was done around population health. This work would be led by the Director of Public Health and the Executive Director – People in relation to Children and Young People.

The Committee was encouraged by the progress that had been made since the CQC inspection and the positive direction of travel reflected the improvement work that had been undertaken. Further evidence of how the Front Door was leading to better outcomes, reduced demand and lower costs was requested and also, evidence of further progress with Direct Payments.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

25 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning introduced the report which detailed the annual work programme of the items for consideration by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee. The Budget Oversight Panel meetings for rest of financial year would focus on financial assurance and provide further detail on specific aspects. It was agreed that the work programme for March would be reviewed with a view to moving some items earlier in the year.

Resolved – That the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year be noted.

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 15 July 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Bennett (Chair)	
	Councillors	C Carubia	T Murphy
		V Wilson	C Baldwin
		EA Grey	G Davies
		L Luxon-Kewley (for T Laing)	J Bird (for A Onwuemene)
		G Jenkinson (for J Grier)	

14 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed all present and those watching via the webcast to the meeting.

15 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Tom Laing, Judith Grier and Amanda Onwuement. Councillors Louise Luxon-Kewley, Jo Bird and Gail Jenkinson substituted.

16 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and to state the nature of the interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

17 MINUTES

The Chair noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2026 did not reflect that Councillor Graham Davies had been present at the meeting. This had been due to a systems error which had since been corrected and he acknowledged Councillor Davies' attendance at the meeting.

Resolved – That, with the additional information that Councillor Graham Davies had been in attendance, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

18 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There was a Member question asked by Gail Jenkinson.

She asked if Wirral ever placed children in unregulated care homes, or whether there were such homes on the Wirral that other authorities had placed children in and what steps were being taken to stop these practices.

The Chair responded that Wirral only used unregistered children's placements in exceptional circumstances, when all registered options had been exhausted and no suitable provision was available to safely meet a child's needs. Before any placement was agreed, extensive due diligence was undertaken, including checks on policies, staff training, DBS clearances and, where possible, references from other local authorities. Approval from the Director of Children's Services was required, ensuring senior oversight.

Where children were placed in unregistered provision, additional safeguards were put in place, including more frequent social work visits, enhanced placement monitoring, commissioning team oversight, and notification to Ofsted where appropriate. The Council would continue to actively seek a suitable registered placement.

For settings within Wirral used by other local authorities, the Council acted on intelligence received and worked closely with regional partners and Ofsted to identify and monitor potentially unregistered providers. Where concerns arose, Ofsted was notified, providers were engaged regarding registration requirements, and placing authorities were asked to outline plans to secure regulated provision where needed.

Although national shortages in children's residential care could occasionally lead to unregistered placements, Wirral's position was that these should be used only as a last resort. The Council's priority was to ensure all children live in safe, appropriate and regulated homes, supported by robust oversight where exceptional arrangements were necessary.

19 RETENDER OF THE FAMILY TIME SERVICE

The Assistant Director for Children & Families introduced a report on behalf of the Executive Director for People which sought approval to undertake a compliant procurement process for the continued delivery of Family Time services for Children Looked After and their families in Wirral.

The current contract for Family Time services with Active 8 Support Services Ltd (Company Number 05680237) was due to expire on 30 September 2026. The service had been monitored and overseen by the Commissioning team and the Family Time Coordinator, providing assurance regarding its quality, flexibility, and professional delivery.

Maintaining sufficient and high-quality Family Time provision was essential to ensuring that the Council remained compliant with its statutory duties and continued to support positive outcomes for children and their families.

The recommendations supported the delivery of the Council Plan by working promote fairness and opportunity for people and communities. This aligned with the vision to prioritise those with the greatest need, to deliver Council services within the means of the council budget and to work across communities with community, voluntary and faith organisations to improve all residents' life chances.

Members queried the rationale for extending the contract for a further six months rather than undertaking a procurement exercise earlier. In response, The Assistant Director for Children & Families acknowledged that the contract should ideally have been reviewed and tendered at an earlier stage but explained that the extension was intended to bridge current service gaps while longer-term arrangements were considered. Members also sought clarification on TUPE implications. The Assistant Director for Children & Families advised that details of the staff affected were available and could be circulated to Members, confirming that staff terms and conditions were protected.

Members further asked about the operation of the service provided by Active 8, including arrangements for transporting children, the venues used for contact sessions, and the emotional support available to children and families. The Assistant Director for Children & Families explained that the Council had worked with the provider for a number of years and maintained confidence in the quality of the service through contract monitoring and feedback from families. She advised that staff were experienced in supporting children and families in challenging and emotional circumstances, and also prepared reports for court where required. Transport arrangements varied, with children sometimes being collected by Active 8 staff or foster carers, and sessions taking place at Active 8's premises. The Assistant Director for Children & Families also clarified that the contracted 1,000 hours related to direct contact time only, with additional time allocated for travel, report writing and social worker observation. In response to a further question, she confirmed her understanding that the provider paid the Real Living Wage.

Resolved – That

1. **A direct award to Active 8 Support Services Ltd (Company Number 05680237) for the provision of Family Time services period of 1st October 2026 – 31st March 2027 with a contract value of £247,688.50 be approved;**

2. **The Executive Director for People be delegated authority to:**

   a. **initiate the most appropriate procurement route for Family Time services with a Contract commencement date of 1st April 2027; and**

   b. **award the contract following completion of the agreed procurement process and evaluation to the highest scoring tenderer based on the Most Advantageous Tenderer criteria.**

20 **2026/27 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (THE PERIOD TO 30 JUNE 2026) (DRAFT)**

The Head of Finance, People introduced a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which set out the financial monitoring information for the Children, Young People and Education Committee as at Quarter 1 (30 June 26) of 2026/27. The report adopted a by-exception approach, focusing on the most significant forecast variances, delivery of budget savings, implementation of immediate in-year mitigations, and any issues requiring further management action or Member attention.

The report provided Members with:
- an overview of the forecast year-end revenue position;
- a summary of material exceptions and emerging financial risks;
- progress on delivery of the 2026/27 savings programme;
- visibility of operational efficiencies and corrective actions to be implemented in-year;
- a summary of reserves and balances where there is a material movement or reliance
- any budget virements or other financial decisions requiring approval or noting
- an overview of the forecast year-end capital position.

At Quarter 1, it was reported that the Children, Families and Education Directorate was forecasting an adverse variance of £0.015m against a net revenue budget of £112.982m.

The financial year 2026/27 had continued to present a challenging environment. As such, budgets needed to be actively managed, with prompt in-year action taken where adverse trends emerged. The report was intended to support effective challenge, accountability and timely decision making.

Members discussed the update on the Directorate's Quarter 1 financial position, which noted that staffing pressures, increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), educational psychology capacity and home-to-school transport remained key cost drivers. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion advised that, despite those pressures, the overall position remained relatively stable, with all savings targets either delivered or on track and no forecast unmitigated savings shortfalls. Members were informed that a programme of transformation work was underway to address home-to-school transport pressures through improvements to route planning, eligibility processes and service delivery models.

In response to questions regarding home-to-school transport, the Executive Director, People confirmed that a further report would be presented to Committee in September. She advised that the Council remained committed to delivering £250,000 of savings in the current financial year and that external consultants had completed an end-to-end review of the service, identifying opportunities to improve processes, introduce digital applications, strengthen eligibility decision-making and optimise routes. A 10% audit sample of the 2,318 pupils accessing transport was also underway to identify opportunities for independent travel training, personal travel budgets and alternative transport arrangements. Responding to queries on SEND capital expenditure, the Head of Finance, People explained that forecast overspends on the Mosslands and Foxfield schemes reflected accelerated delivery of specialist provision and were offset within the wider capital programme. She also advised that the Quarter 1 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position was still being finalised, with a forecast deficit continuing to be managed through the Council's SEND reform programme. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion added that DSG performance and monitoring arrangements were closely linked to the SEND reform plans and Department for Education requirements.

Members also raised questions regarding school accommodation and educational psychology capacity. The Assistant Director of Education outlined ongoing work to review mobile classrooms across the school estate, noting that schools had been supported with temporary air conditioning units during periods of hot weather and that guidance had been issued to schools to manage health and safety risks locally. In response to questions about educational psychology services, The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion reported active recruitment of educational psychologists and senior educational psychologists, successful retention of trainee psychologists progressing through doctoral programmes, and expansion of capacity through a new locum framework approved by the Committee. He advised that these measures would help support increasing EHCP demand, improve quality assurance and contribute to the successful delivery of the Council's SEND reform programme.

Resolved – That:

1. **The forecast revenue position for Quarter 1 of £0.015m (adverse) be noted;**
2. **The progress on delivery of the 2026/27 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted;**
3. **The forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1 be noted; and**
4. **The capital position as at the end of Quarter 1 be noted.**

21 **SEND IMPROVEMENT**

The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion introduced a report on behalf of the Director of Children's Services which provided the Children Young People and Education Committee with an update on the improvement programme for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for the Local Area in Wirral. The report covered the May and June Partnership Board meetings including the extraordinary meeting held on the 16th June. Over the period, in addition to the regular reporting on the local area's progress against its Priority Action Plan, the LAPSB received and approved the SEND Reform plans as required by of the Department of Education. The June board meeting focussed on the impact of the changes to the neurodevelopmental pathway that have been put in place since the start of 2025.

Members welcomed the SEND Reform Plan and sought clarification on how performance targets and measures had been developed. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion explained that the metrics and targets were agreed and validated through the SEND Partnership Board, with input from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England representatives to ensure they were both ambitious and achievable. In response to questions about approval of the reform plan, he advised that, should the plan not be accepted by the DfE, feedback would be provided and the Council would have an opportunity to revise and resubmit it. He noted that delays in approval could affect access to the SEND Stability Grant and increase costs associated with servicing the High Needs Block deficit. Members also discussed teacher training and workforce development, with the Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion outlining the "Experts at Hand" model, under which specialist practitioners would work alongside schools to provide tailored support and training, helping teachers meet children's needs more effectively within mainstream settings.

Members queried how the reforms would support early intervention, inclusion and improved outcomes for children. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion emphasised that the "Experts at Hand" approach was intended to provide practical support rather than create additional referral pathways or

increase reliance on formal diagnoses. He explained that the proposed skill-mix model would continue to operate under the supervision of qualified specialists, ensuring quality assurance while making effective use of wider workforce capacity. Questions were also raised about the wider curriculum and opportunities for children to succeed beyond traditional attainment measures. The Assistant Director of Education advised that national education reforms and the Ofsted framework were placing greater emphasis on personal development, wellbeing, creative subjects and enrichment activities, and highlighted the importance of linking these areas with preparation for adulthood and SEND inclusion.

Further discussion focused on performance, outcomes and children's experiences. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion reported significant improvements in speech and language therapy waiting times, which had reduced from over a year to around five weeks following targeted investment and service improvements. In response to questions about SEND outcomes, he acknowledged the need for a stronger focus on long-term measures reflecting young people's experiences and aspirations. Members also discussed elective home education and its relationship with SEND and mental health needs. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion and the Assistant Director for Education explained ongoing work to develop flexible schooling arrangements aimed at supporting children to remain connected to mainstream education where appropriate. Members welcomed the inclusion of case studies within the report, with officers noting that these demonstrated the intended impact of the reforms in improving support for children and increasing family confidence without necessarily requiring formal diagnoses.

Resolved – That the progress of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board in progressing system improvement as required by the Improvement Notice be noted.

22 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee reported that the committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

It was envisaged that the work programme would be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the

Children, Young People and Education Committee was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members requested that, in addition to the proposed workshop on Juno Homes, a report be submitted to Committee setting out arrangements for repayment of the Council's loan to the company. Members also raised concerns regarding external providers converting properties into children's homes within the borough and the placement of children from outside the area, suggesting that this issue should be considered as part of the Committee's future work programme. In response to a query regarding access to NHS dentistry, officers advised that a briefing note would be provided and noted that the matter had recently been considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Resolved – That the proposed Children, Young People and Education Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year be noted.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 16 July 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Kelly (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Foulkes	B Kenny
		A Gardner	GJ Davies
		J Walsh-McDonald	C Cooke
		L Luxon-Kewley	G Bennett

7 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members of the Planning Committee, Officers, members of the public and those watching the webcast to the meeting.

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Harry Gorman.

9 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No interests were declared.

10 MINUTES

Resolved – That

1. **The minutes of the Panning Committee meeting held on 25 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.**

2. **The minutes of the Strategic Applications Sub Committee meeting held on 25 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.**

11 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE - PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Senior Planning Manager presented the report of the Assistant Director Chief Planner, which provided an update of the performance in determining planning applications.

Resolved – That Planning Committee notes and endorses the performance report.

12 **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE - PLANNING APPEALS**

The Senior Planning Manager presented the report of the Assistant Director Chief Planner, which provided an update of the performance in determining planning appeals.

Resolved – That Planning Committee notes and endorses the performance update report.

13 **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE - ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY BETWEEN: 1ST OCTOBER 2025 & 31ST DECEMBER 2025 AND 1ST JANUARY 2026 & 31ST MARCH 2026**

The Senior Planning Manager presented the report of the Assistant Director Chief Planner, which provided an update of the performance in enforcement activity between 1st October 2025 and 31st December 2025 and 1st January 2026 and 31st March 2026. It was noted that a supplement agenda was published containing an addendum report in relation to this item. The addendum contained corrections to the figures provided in the original report.

Resolved – That Planning Committee notes and endorses the performance report.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Monday, 20 July 2026

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone and read the webcast notice.

PRESENT:

Councillor Julie McManus	Chair
Matthew Bennett	Chief Executive, Wirral Council
Sayyed Osman	Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning, Wirral Council
Dave Bradburn	Director of Public Health, Wirral Council
Councillor Stephen Bennett	Wirral Council
Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde	Wirral Council
Councillor Ewan Tomeny	Wirral Council
Elizabeth Hartley	Executive Director of People, Wirral Council
Dr Abel Adegoke	Chair of Primary Care Trust
Dr Jo Chwalko	Wirral University Teaching Hospital
Sian Blackman	Magenta Living
Leigh Thompson	ICB
Madelaine Williams	DWP Partnership Manager

Also present:

Liz Bishop	Chief Executive, ICB
David Hammond	Wirral Community Health & Care NHS FT)
Adrian Leach	Wirral Council
Sophie Baird	Wirral Council
Bev Murray	Wirral Council
Jean Masanyero Bennie	Wirral Council
Vicki Shaw	Wirral Council
Christine Morley	Secretary

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Cllr Ian Lewis
- Karen Prior – Chief Executive Healthwatch Wirral
- Isla Wilson – Chair of CWP
- Simon Banks, Director of Place (Wirral) NHS Cheshire and Merseyside was substituted by Leigh Thompson, Director of Commissioning Liverpool City Region ICB
- Libby Eastley, Magenta Housing was substituted by Sian Blackman

- Janelle Holmes, Chief Executive, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH), who was substituted by Dr Jo Chwalko, Chief Integration and Partnerships Officer.

The Committee observed a minute's silence in memory of Moira McLaughlin and sent their condolences and best wishes to her family.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

4 MINUTES

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 12 March 2026 be agreed as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions, statements or petitions were received.

6 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

The Director of Public Health, the Principal of Public Health and the Senior Public Health Practitioner – Intelligence introduced the report and explained that it was a statutory requirement for the Health and Wellbeing Board to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This year's summary report was an update of the 2025 report and maintained a focus on the Marmot All Together Fairer (ATF) Beacon Indicators. The JSNA gave an overview of factors affecting people's health and wellbeing in Wirral and highlighted significant improvements. It helped to identify current and future needs so that services and priorities could be planned effectively and have maximum impact for Wirral's population.

Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which drove the core programmes to reduce health inequalities and improve population-level health outcomes, was developed and continued to be informed by the local intelligence and insight from the JSNA.

The website was constantly reviewed and refreshed and included enhanced interactive reporting tools. Training support had also been developed which included bite size videos available on the Council's training platform FLO and Wirral Local Insight provided an online community mapping tool which gave access to neighbourhood level data specifically for Wirral. It was highlighted that the website contained new pages on domestic abuse and dementia and deep dive needs assessments such as the 2025 Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. The qualitative research tool kit was now being used across the

Council and its partners. A qualitative insight repository was available on the JSNA website and provided a single centralised location which helped to reduce duplication in engagement activity.

A nationally funded Local Authority Research Practitioner (LARP) had been in post for twelve months of a two year contract. The aim was to strengthen research, culture and evidence based practice. An organisation wide assessment of research and intelligence skills had been completed and had informed a structured training programme which was due to be rolled out in the coming months. Over the next twelve months the LARP would focus on strengthening academic partnerships, improving access to funding and embedding evidence based decision making across the Council. The current work plan was contained in the report and a housing needs assessment was in the process of being scoped. Work continued to fill intelligence gaps through the development of a large scale health and wellbeing survey led by Public Health and system partners with further fieldwork planned for later in 2026. This would provide deeper insight into residents' health and establish a robust baseline from which to track progress. A detailed JSNA statistical summary was included as an appendix. It was agreed across Cheshire and Merseyside to monitor the Marmot indicators overtime. These indicators were aligned to Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities which were benchmarked against England and the North West. An interactive tool had been developed to monitor and understand the root causes of health inequalities. It was noted that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy recognised that improving health and reducing health inequalities was a long term process that required sustained action to address wider determinants of health. The All Together Fairer indicators would support tracking progress and inform action over the longer term.

Members queried which of the new JSNA products for 2026/2027 was expected to have the greatest impact on commissioning decisions and how the impact would be measured. It was clarified that all of the insight intelligence tools would influence commissioning.

Members asked about the gaps that the current intelligence survey was expected to fill in particular in relation to Neighbourhood health inequalities. It was reported that Wirral was data rich and the survey was to try and learn about the people that Wirral did not currently know about such as those people who did not access services.

Resolved – That

1. **The achievements and progress made on the JSNA programme in 2025/26 be recognised.**
2. **The proposals for the ongoing JSNA programme be noted and supported.**

7 **NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH MODEL**

The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer, Wirral Community Health & Care NHS Foundation Trust presented the report of the Wirral Provider Alliance which provided an update on the national requirements and expectations regarding the development of the Neighbourhood Health model, based on the latest guidance available from NHS England / Department of Health & Social Care. It also provided an overview of work underway in Wirral, and the supporting governance structure within which this will be delivered. In addition, it outlined the role of Health and Wellbeing Board in developing the Neighbourhood Health model and Plan, with a proposed timeline for further updates and development activity. The Neighbourhood Health Framework, published in March 2026, described the aims of Neighbourhood health which included improving health and care outcomes, organising services around the person, reducing pressure on acute services, cutting waste and duplication and delivering core targets.

The importance of the three reform agendas was highlighted. Reform agenda 1 included improving services for people who needed routine care, reform agenda 2 was to improve proactive care for people and reform agenda 3 was to deliver better alternatives to hospital care.

The national team had visited Cheshire & Merseyside and one of the challenges they posed was the identification of the one percent of people who were at risk of health crisis and access to emergency care and the provision of a whole system response. Delivering better alternatives to hospital care included delivering urgent community response or virtual wards. The Neighbourhood model was not just about things that happened within the neighbourhood footprint. It was about the whole system mobilising and working differently. In Wirral some things would happen on a Wirral wide scale and others would happen on a neighbourhood footprint and others on a sub-neighbourhood footprint. The national team had highlighted the power of micro-commissioning.

A preliminary response had been submitted based on the minimum requirement for meeting the national expectations around Neighbourhood Health Centres but there was further to go. The Neighbourhood Health Model would need to be set amongst a wider network of Community Hubs and other public assets and the work that sat behind the delivery of services from those centres also needed to be done.

NHS England had launched a consultation around the Multi-Neighbourhood and Single-Neighbourhood which would close on 10 September 2026. The consultation had begun to describe the contracting models that would underpin this new way of working.

The Wirral Provider Alliance had a set of programmes, and projects for the

delivery of the Neighbourhood Model and it was important to join these up collectively with other work that was happening within Wirral. Community Hubs would need to be set up alongside the Community Health Centres and work around the Adult Social Care prevention agenda would need to be set up alongside the work around frailty and Neighbourhood MDT's. Six health neighbourhood footprints had been agreed by Cheshire and Merseyside ICB.

The Neighbourhood Health Network set out three main areas which included clear expectations defining local aims and outcomes. Progress could be tracked against nationally mandated metrics and it was the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify any local outcome measures alongside these. There was also a connection to be made between the Neighbourhood Health Model and other local initiatives such as Pride in Place, Best Start in Life and the SEND programme. During 2026/2027, the Health and Wellbeing Board would oversee the development of the Neighbourhood Health Plan alongside the ICB and there would be a workshop on 17 August 2026 regarding outcomes and initiatives.

The Cheshire and Merseyside BI team was setting up a dashboard, to measure progress against the three reforms and this would be available to Members.

Members queried the criteria used to determine the boundaries of the six footprints and how the effectiveness would be reviewed. The Programme Director for the Cheshire and Merseyside Neighbourhood programme would attend the Health and Wellbeing Board to present an update on what was happening across Cheshire and Merseyside. There would need to be a reset around governance and the amount of information shared, which would require co-operation and collaboration. A new operating model was being looked at across the 9 different areas of Cheshire and Merseyside and further work was being done around estates and with voluntary sector organisations.

The need for a definition of a neighbourhood was highlighted by Members and the Director of Commissioning, Liverpool City Region would work with Wirral to provide a clear and concise definition.

The Chief Integration and Partnerships Officer, WUTH, highlighted the need to factor in impact and outcome and there was a need to be Wirral specific. Neighbourhood Health Centres were initially mapped against what Wirral had but it was not just NHS estates but also Council estates that need to be looked at. Health on the high street was discussed and public engagement around where and how people would like to access services needed to be factored in.

Members were keen to ensure that the health needs of some parts of the population would not be missed through averages. It was explained that the job of the Neighbourhood would be to use the data to understand what was

happening and target the resources most effectively. The two main groups to pay close attention to were the people who used services a lot and those people who were disengaged with services.

The Chair of the Primary Care Collaborative noted that the Wirral Primary Care Collaborative had an agreement to work across Neighbourhoods when it was necessary.

The Director of Public Health emphasised that one of the principles in the Altogether Fairer Neighbourhoods was co-production, collaboration and community power and this needed to be central to the plans going forward.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of community power and the concerns of residents that if they were not involved in Neighbourhoods they could lose some of the services provided by their local GP surgery. Reassurance was given that each provider had a voice at the Wirral Provider Alliance and it was through that work that Neighbourhoods would be progressed.

Workshops would be held in August and September 2026 to develop and approve a Neighbourhood Plan for approval by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Resolved – That

1. **The update provided with regard to the requirements and expectations of the Neighbourhood Health model be noted.**
2. **Work underway in Wirral related to development and implementation of the neighbourhood health model be noted.**
3. **The role of the Health and Wellbeing Board in its development be noted.**

8 **BETTER CARE FUND SECTION 75 UPDATE, OUTTURN 2025/26 AND BETTER CARE FUND PLAN 2026/27**

The Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning presented this report which provided an update of activity against the Better Care Fund (BCF) for outturn of financial year 2025/26 and an update relating to the Section 75 agreement made pursuant to the National Health Services Act 2006 (between the Council and the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), (the section 75 agreement); and the Better Care Fund plan for 2026/27. The report had been to Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee in July 2026 for oversight of the finance and delivery elements of the BCF. The Health and Wellbeing Board had a mandatory responsibility for the sign off of the Better Care Fund and had oversight of performance and delivery. The Section 75 agreement with the NHS involved the pooling of resources under the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Care Act 2014 and required integrated working. The BCF required Wirral Council and the

NHS to work as one system and enable the pooling of resources to jointly commission integrated services to support the delivery of better outcomes for people. It was noted that Wirral as a system was the highest performing Local Authority in relation to No Criteria to Reside (NCTR) and continued to do everything possible to support that in a challenging environment with high demand at the Front Door. Therapy lead models were used to support admission avoidance and rehabilitation and reablement were offered to achieve long term independence. Workshops had been held to produce the Better Care Fund for 2026/2027 and there had been consultation with the Wirral Provider Alliance around the services delivered through the BCF.

Workshops with elected Members had also taken place to look at delivery of the BCF and any potential savings. £1.2m of adjustments and savings had been identified and this had ensured that the BCF for 2026/2027 financial year of £72.4m would meet the demands within the Wirral system. The disabled facilities grant was £6m and there was a minimum NHS contribution of £40m. The Local Authority Better Care Fund grant was £23m and there was an additional contribution from the Local Authority of £2.2m and an additional NHS contribution of £24,000.

The BCF was currently subject to reform and the guidance required a focus on prevention and alignment with the Neighbourhood Health Model. Wherever possible, Wirral would try and use national resources to provide the best opportunity to develop the BCF. Three BCF workshops had been arranged in August and September 2026.

It was clarified that there was an ambition around data sharing to avoid duplication and to ensure that there was a clearer focus on residents. Work had begun on this with the NHS and the CIPHA system. An overview of the whole system would allow the provision of services targeted towards outcomes. The Neighbourhood Health Centres and Community Hubs would aim to ensure that there was no wrong door for residents who would only have to tell their story once. Multidisciplinary teams would work to provide the right help co-ordinated through a single contact. The WPA provided a platform for collaboration with GPs on Wirral to work towards this ambition.

The Chief Executive of the ICB noted that digital connectivity was a challenge as it was not always a patient who would enter a neighbourhood centre for help and advice. There would need to be some flexibility in the connection between all the partners in Neighbourhoods to enable it to work so the person in the neighbourhood would not have to repeat their story. There would need to be a continuous record of any conversations or plans. Data sharing was a national issue for the Neighbourhood team and work was in progress on a national level. The question of who would be the accountable person for data sharing in a Neighbourhood was still being worked through.

Members would like to see some contingencies for what should happen when

data could not be accessed.

Resolved – That

1. **The detail of the pooled budget areas in 2026/27 as part of the mandatory Section 75 agreement with the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB be noted.**
2. **The review activity already undertaken in 2025/2026 be noted.**
3. **The further review activity planned for 2026/2027 to support the preparation for the move to the Integrated Care Funding Framework (in financial year 2027/2028) be endorsed.**

9 **UNDERSTANDING AND INFLUENCING DEMAND FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE IN WIRRAL**

The Assistant Director and Consultant in Public Health presented the report of the Director of Public Health which provided an overview of a new portfolio of work that aimed to better understand the rising demand for Adult Social Care services and establish what might be done to lessen the impact of this. The work had been jointly requested by the Council and the ICB and involved a deep dive analysis of local health and social care data, reviewing evidence of good practice of what worked to prevent delay and reduce the need for Adult Social Care.

It was clarified that the programme of work was now four months into the twelve month programme. A new prevention strategy had been drafted and partners were currently providing feedback.

Publicly available data had been analysed to benchmark Wirral against other Local Authority areas. Headline figures were presented in the report and further data would be presented at the BCF workshop. Anecdotal evidence showed that there was a nuance to understanding the demand for Adult Social Care. The process of gaining access to Adult Social Care data was underway and the outcome of the application for linked ICB data was awaited.

Wirral was exploring becoming an age friendly Borough. This portfolio of work was strongly linked to both the Neighbourhood Health work and the Better Care Fund Reform work and recognised the role of integrated health and social care.

A Better Care Fund workshop for Health and Wellbeing Board Members would take place in August 2026 to present further findings and support the thinking around the opportunities presented by the BCF reform. Over the remaining twenty months findings would be presented to partners across the system as they emerged and full engagement of partners and members of this Board was requested to understand the findings and to identify and own any actions.

It was clarified to Members that an application had been made to access the Adult Social Care data required to understand the journey through care. An application had been made to DARG and the ICB and the outcome was anticipated in August 2026.

Members asked for further information around early presentation of multimorbidity of long term conditions. It was clarified that part of the deep dive would be looking at the drivers of demand and the drivers of poorer health.

There was an emphasis on prevention and understanding when people were presenting to strengthen prevention and to support health inequalities.

Members acknowledged that lifestyle was a big issue as there were some chronic diseases in the younger age group which were driven by lifestyle.

The Chief Executive of the ICB stated that if data was used to target people early who had never accessed healthcare services they may be quite surprised that they were now at risk. In fact, they may not have wanted to know that they were at risk. Engagement with communities was needed and the ICB were doing a piece of work to identify people early.

Members discussed exploring the age friendly Borough and the Chair highlighted that Wirral needed to be good at helping people to live well. The data would enable future planning.

Members asked about the increased number of people coming into long term care and what proportion of the increase related to older working aged adults in comparison to older adults who did not work. This data would be provided once the deep dive analysis was completed.

The Chair welcomed the report and requested regular updates.

Resolved – That the work being undertaken to better understand the rising demand for Adult Social Care services be noted, and system engagement in this work to ensure that relevant findings were shared with partners and recommendations owned by them be supported.

10 **SEND IMPROVEMENT**

The Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion presented the report of the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the improvement programme for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for the Local Area in Wirral. The report covered the March to May 2026 Local Area SEND Partnership Board (LASPB) meetings with a focus on performance across the partnership and progress made against the local area's Priority Action Plan for SEND. The May LASPB was a session focussed on the

approval of the draft SEND Reform Plan for Wirral in time for the initial submission to the DfE advisors. The report included the latest reported versions of the Local Area SEND Performance Dashboard and Priority Action Plan updates as reported to LASPB in May 2026. A SEND report covering the period from May to June 2026 had been to Children's Committee in July 2026 and would come to this Board in September 2026.

The report outlined progress against the Local Area SEND strategy and the scoping around the workforce development under priority 3. Progress regarding the EHCP recovery plan was also included. It was highlighted that the SEND Partnership Board had been informed that significant progress had been made against the recovery plan and tangible operational improvements had been experienced. This included stabilisation of operational processes, clearer governance and overcoming the severe backlog and several longstanding system issues.

It was reported that a significant proportion of the actions had been completed and were embedded as business as usual across SEND Start and the wider partnership.

A set of actions were incomplete when this report was written and several related to statutory compliance and workforce capability. Work was focussed strongly on that and a revised Quality Assurance Framework for EHCP's had been put together at the SEND Partnership Board.

It was highlighted that the new neurodevelopmental profiling tool was due to be launched across the system and embedded into the pathway in September 2026. It had already been embedded into the graduated approach. It was important to acknowledge the feedback from SENCO's in the development of the approach and in particular, to get profiles of children recognised earlier to enable support to be put in place earlier.

The improved access to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) services and timeliness was highlighted along with the reduction in the waiting list by over 280 children and the average wait for the service had reduced from18 weeks to 6 weeks. The longest wait for the service had reduced from 51 weeks down to 17 weeks over the last 18 months and did not attend rates had also significantly declined. It was highlighted that 100% of children had been seen within the 18 week key performance metric.

The Department for Education had announced SEND reforms in February 2026 and Professor Adam Boddison had been commissioned to provide support to draft the Wirral SEND Reform plan.

Progress against the Priority Action Plan remained a key focus ahead of the monitoring visit which was anticipated in Autumn 2026.

The Chair commended the team on the work that had taken place on SALT.

Members asked whether there were any specific milestones that would be reported on in relation to the neurodiversity pathways. A detailed impact session on the neurodevelopmental pathway had been taken to the LASPB in June 2026 and would come to this Board in September 2026. There were operational milestones in relation to the implementation of the profiling tool and some of the work on data gathering and the move into multidisciplinary teams was being set out. It was agreed that information would be circulated following the next steering group meeting.

It was explained that educational psychologists formed the backbone of EHCP's and Wirral had struggled to recruit them. The SEND reforms had emphasised the central importance of these roles in terms of statutory advice and early consultation. In addition, work to support schools much earlier had driven up demand. Wirral had a good track record in recruiting second year PHDs and retaining them as they trained and qualified. In relation to the statutory assessment, Wirral were currently out to tender for a framework to provide additional support to underpin the work of the core team. This was due to be put in place in September 2026 and would provide the capacity to undertake assessments in line with the current level of demand.

Resolved – That the progress of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board in progressing system improvement as required by the Improvement Notice be noted.

11 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the proposed work programme for the following Municipal Year.

The Chief Executive of the ICB offered to outline the approach to dentistry in a workshop.

The following item would be added to the work programme:

- Dentistry Joint Workshop with Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee and Children and Young People Committee.

Resolved – That subject to the above additional item, the proposed Health and Wellbeing Board work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year be noted.

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TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 July 2026

Present:	Councillor	J Johnson (Chair)	
	Councillors	KJ Williams	J Grier
		R Molyneux	G Wood
		M Redfern	H Cameron
		K Hodson	G McManus
		A Ainsworth	K Stuart

10 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the webcast and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

11 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

12 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No interests were declared.

13 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June be approved and adopted as a correct record.

14 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

14.1 Public Questions

One public question had been submitted and accepted to this meeting.

Councillor Vida Wilson referred to the redevelopment project on Pasture Road, Moreton, which included a contribution from Lidl towards the expansion of Moreton Library. Councillor Wilson stated that officers had previously advised the contribution was £500,000 and noted that six years had passed since the project was launched. Councillor Wilson further stated that works had been reportedly halted in 2024 due to rising costs and a need to re-evaluate the scope of the project. Councillor Wilson requested an update on the current position and sought clarification as to when the promised improvements to Moreton Library were expected to be delivered.

In response, the Chair advised that the officers originally involved in the matter within the Regeneration Service had since left the Council. Further enquiries were being undertaken with colleagues across the Council to clarify the position and ensure that an accurate response could be provided. The Chair confirmed that a detailed written response would be provided and published alongside the minutes of the meeting. The Chair urged officers to gather the necessary information as quickly as possible to enable a comprehensive response to be sent. A supplementary question regarding the officer responsible for progressing the matter and associated timescales was referred for a written response.

14.2 **Statements and Petitions**

There were no statements or petitions received from the public.

14.3 **Questions by Members**

There were no Member questions received.

15 **Q1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Finance – Place presented the report, which set out the financial monitoring position for this Committee as at Quarter 1 (30 June) of 2026/27.

Members were advised that the Council was forecasting an adverse variance of £3.794m, primarily due to pressures within Adult Social Care. This Committee was forecasting an adverse variance of £0.480m against a net revenue budget of £10.370m.

The adverse variance of this Committee largely related to a £140,000 shortfall arising from delays in the delivery of planned leisure savings, partially offset by a favourable forecast of £92,000 resulting from vacancies within the Customer Contact Centre. Key risks identified included lower than anticipated ticket sales at the Floral Pavilion Theatre and the Environmental Enforcement Contract.

Members raised the following questions/comments:

- Members questioned the impact the pantomime ticket sales could have on the financial performance of the Floral Pavilion Theatre
- Members enquired whether changes to the Floral Pavilion Theatre membership programme had impacted sales
- Members queried the slippage in the delivery of leisure savings
- Members queried the impact of the Customer Contact Centre vacancies on residents
- Members requested an overview of the Environmental Enforcement contract

Officers advised that Quarter 1 was typically a quieter period for ticket sales at the Floral Pavilion Theatre and that the pantomime generated a significant proportion of the venue's income. Officers further advised that the slippage in leisure savings was due to a staff restructuring programme taking longer than expected, with elements of the programme still ongoing.

In relation to Contact Centre vacancies, officers further advised that work had been undertaken to harmonise a number of frontline customer contact teams across services to improve customer outcomes and to increase service resilience.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes:

1. **the forecast revenue position for Quarter 1 of £0.048m (adverse);**

2. **the in-year efficiencies and corrective actions implemented to date, and the forecast financial benefit arising from those actions in 2026/27.**

3. **the progress on delivery of the 2026/27 savings programme at Quarter 4.**

4. **the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1,**

5. **The capital programme at Quarter 1.**

16 **TOWN OF CULTURE 2028 PROGRAMME – BIRKENHEAD AND NEW BRIGHTON EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

The Senior Project Engagement Manager and the Co-Founder and CEO at Future Yard and Chair of the Left Bank Collective presented the report.

Members were advised that the UK Town of Culture competition was the first national Town of Culture programme to be delivered by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Expressions of Interest had been submitted for Birkenhead and New Brighton and had been developed and led by community partnerships with support from the Council. The aim of the programme was to widen participation in cultural activity and support regeneration.

Members were informed that, of 398 submissions received nationally, Birkenhead had been shortlisted alongside fourteen other towns and awarded £60,000 to support the development of the next stage of the bid. Birkenhead was the only town in the North West of England to be shortlisted.

The themes of the Birkenhead Town of Culture bid were:

- Big Weird Outdoors
- Making it Ours
- Left Bank After Dark
- The House That Shouldn't Exist.

Members raised the following questions/ comments:

- Members asked about the timelines for the Birkenhead Park UNESCO Heritage Site bid and the UK Town of Culture bid
- Members queried the inclusion of Birkenhead Priory, Birkenhead Town Hall, the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum and Birkenhead Central Library within the programme.
- Members suggested that large-scale outdoor events and concerts could be held in Birkenhead Park
- Members how community organisations could become involved in the development of the bid and future programme

Members were advised that the Town of Culture bid would complement the Birkenhead Park UNESCO World Heritage Site bid, with UNESCO assessment visits expected to take place during the proposed Town of Culture year in 2028.
The bid sought to celebrate and animate Birkenhead's heritage, cultural assets and public spaces. Venues such as Birkenhead Priory, Birkenhead Town Hall, the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum and Birkenhead Central Library were recognised as important components of the town's cultural offer.

It was acknowledged that heritage, community and friends' groups had a role to play in shaping the next stage of the bid. Large-scale events formed an important part of the vision. The programme would place a strong emphasis on creating opportunities for young people, developing skills pathways into the creative industries, and ensuring accessibility and participation for all.

Following discussion, an addition to the recommendations was proposed by Councillor Johnson, and seconded by Councillor Redfern that -

RESOLVED - That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee:

1. **Notes that the Council supported the submission of Expressions of Interest to the UK Town of Culture 2028 programme for both Birkenhead and New Brighton.**

2. **Notes that Birkenhead has been shortlisted as one of only 15 locations nationally from 398 applications and is one of four shortlisted locations in the large town category.**

3. **Notes the award of £60,000 development funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support the preparation of Birkenhead's full bid.**

4. **Acknowledges the contribution of partners, stakeholders and organisations involved in developing both submissions.**

5. **Requests that a workshop of the full committee be arranged with officers and representatives of the Birkenhead Culture Partnership Board to allow members to feed into the development of the full bid;**

6. **Requests the Assistant Director Chief Regeneration Officer to bring back future proposals relating to the development of Birkenhead's full bid, including any necessary financial, resource and governance implications, to a future meeting of this, following the committee workshop**

17 **TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Assistant Director Libraries, Leisure and Customer Engagement presented the report, which provided performance information in relation to the neighbourhood services that report to this Committee.

Members were advised that performance remained strong across all service areas, with increases in leisure participation, library engagement and museum visitor numbers. Strong attendance figures for swimming and golf had contributed to the growing trend in leisure centre participation. Leisure services had generated an estimated £28m of social value, an increase from £25m in 2024/25.

Members were informed that the Positive Futures programme had engaged with 1,238 young people and that participation in the We Are Undefeatable programme had increased to 651 participants. Libraries maintained 20,000 active users and delivered a range of activities and events. Visitor numbers had increased at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, whilst a reduction in visitors at Birkenhead Priory would be investigated.

Members raised the following questions / comments

- Members enquired about participation levels within the Adult Swim programme
- Members sought clarification on the operating model for West Kirby Marine Lake
- Members questioned how library events were being communicated to residents
- Members queried the gender balance of participation in sports activities
- Members enquired about the works required at West Kirby Marine Lake and New Brighton Marine Lake
- Members questioned visitor numbers at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum

Officers confirmed that occupancy levels within the Adult Swim Programme were approximately 80%, with some sessions fully subscribed and that opportunities to provide additional sessions were being explored. Members were advised that participation levels would be impacted by the closure of the pool at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre and that officers were exploring how the programme could develop at other sites. Officers advised that discussions were continuing with the indicative successful bidder for West Kirby Marine Lake and that further information would be shared with the Committee. Officers confirmed they would review the communication of library events. To address the gender balance in sports participation, officers were engaging with users to better understand the types of activities they would like to access. Members were informed that studies undertaken by the Coastal Defence Team had identified the need for dredging and repair works at West Kirby Marine Lake. It was noted that these works would require significant funding and that the Council was in contact with Natural England. There were no plans to dredge New Brighton Marine Lake.

RESOLVED - That the Tourism Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the content of the report and highlighted any areas requiring further clarification or action.

18 **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was agreed that the work programme be considered prior to the Heritage Champion update report. The Chair introduced the report on the Committee's work programme.

Members had previously requested a briefing note from The Liverpool City Region on tourism, they requested for this to be changed to a Committee Report.

Members also requested that the Library Improvement Fund Briefing Note be circulated in advance of the Library Strategy 2026-2031 report at the Committee's September meeting.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the proposed Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee work programme.

19 **HERITAGE CHAMPION UPDATE REPORT**

The Member Champion for Heritage provided an update on heritage-related activity across the borough.

The Member Champion highlighted the following to Members:

- The great work taking place in Clifton Park, Port Sunlight, Oxton Village, Birkenhead Park and Hamilton Square
- The progress of the Local Listing Campaign which had identified 287 building/ structures
- Collaboration with the University of Liverpool
- The formation of a Tourism Heritage Trail to support tourism promotion
- Appreciation for the significant contribution made by voluntary groups throughout Wirral

Members noted their thanks to the Member Champion for his work.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the contents of the report and appendix.

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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 22 July 2026

Present:	Councillor	P Basnett (Chair)	
	Councillors	R Molyneux	M Skillicorn
		S Mountney	J Bird
		C Carubia	G Jenkinson
		K Hodson	E Lamb
		S Bennett	M Booth
		A Davies	J Johnson
		S Foulkes	I Lewis
		T Murphy	P Gilchrist
		S Powell-Wilde	P Jobson (for J McManus)

15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

16 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Julie McManus.

Councillor Paul Jobson was in attendance as deputy.

17 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Policy and Resources Committee were asked to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, in connection with any item on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Steve Foulkes declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest as Chair of Liverpool City Region Transport Committee.

Councillor Jeff Green declared a personal non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Liverpool City Region Transport Committee.

Councillor Ed Lamb stated that he benefited from free on-street residential parking and wished this to be recorded in relation to Item 10 (Parking Strategy Refresh). Following discussion, it was generally noted that this circumstance applied to all Members present around the table. Officer advice confirmed that the report did not propose the introduction of parking charges on all streets across the borough.

18 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

19 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Kate Walton asked whether the proposed parking data collection would cover all Council car parks and what information would be gathered.

The Chair confirmed that a comprehensive occupancy survey would be undertaken across all Council-owned car parks, including both charged and free-to-use sites.
Sarah Spoor, (presented by Garrick Prayog) asked what assurance could be provided that the Liscard Regeneration Programme would be fully delivered by March 2028 and that funding would be spent for the benefit of Liscard.

The Chair outlined progress across the programme, including public realm improvements, Seaview Road affordable housing, community and business grant schemes, and Dominic House, and confirmed that delivery and expenditure would be monitored through established governance arrangements to meet the March 2028 deadline.

A supplementary question raised concerns about reported capacity issues and delays affecting delivery timescales.
In response the Chair agreed to verify the comments made at the referenced meeting and provide clarification alongside the written response.

Kathy Roberts, on behalf of Wirral Leisure Group and Fort Perch Rock**,** requested assurance that the refreshed parking strategy would support tourism and recognise the importance of free parking to New Brighton's visitor economy.

The Chair advised that the refreshed parking strategy would be informed by a comprehensive parking study and aligned with wider Council objectives, including economic growth, regeneration and tourism.

Kathy Roberts asked a supplementary question, querying whether local businesses would be consulted as part of the strategy review.

The Chair provided assurance that local businesses would be consulted during the development of the refreshed parking strategy

20 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

Ms Horsburgh, speaking on behalf of WOW West Kirby and local businesses, welcomed the proposed Parking Strategy Refresh and urged the Council to adopt a broader, cross-council approach that recognised parking's role in supporting economic growth, regeneration, tourism, public health and thriving town centres. She called for the review to be informed by up-to-date local evidence, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and economic and visitor impact assessments before any future parking charge proposals are considered.

Mr Rogan presented a petition arguing that introducing parking charges would create additional barriers for businesses and entrepreneurs, potentially discouraging investment, visitors and high street activity. He encouraged the Council to focus on supporting business growth and regeneration rather than pursuing measures which could negatively affect local trade and economic development.

Ms Elliott, representing the interests of small independent businesses presented a petition, expressing concerns that parking charges could disadvantage local traders, reduce visitor numbers, and make town centres and coastal destinations less competitive compared with out-of-town retail parks. She also highlighted potential impacts on low-income residents, families, workers, older people and disabled visitors, and asked the Council to reconsider any future introduction of parking charges.

21 **NEW WIRRAL PLAN**

The Interim Director of Transformation introduced a report which presented the Wirral Plan 2027 to 2031, for Policy and Resources Committee to consider and recommend to Council for approval.

The Plan is the primary document in the Council's policy framework and set out the priorities and planned activities over the four-year election cycle. The previous Plan (Wirral Working Together 2023- 27) was approved in December 2023. The new Plan took account of changes in the Council's operating environment and set out a new direction to create a more sustainable model for Council service delivery which addressed the Council's financial challenges.

Members welcomed the Plan's clear and accessible approach, sought assurances regarding digital inclusion, community hubs, data sharing and service delivery, and emphasised the importance of effective implementation and locally relevant outcomes before agreeing to recommend the Plan to Council for approval.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee endorsed the new Wirral Plan for 2027 to 2031 and recommended it for approval by Council.

22 **STRATEGIC LAND DISPOSALS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Interim Director of Capital Programmes and Assets stated that the purpose of the report was to seek approval of the Council's approach to the disposal of Council-owned land to support the accelerated delivery of affordable housing across the borough.

The approach to delivery was through a Wirral Strategic Housing Partnership under the banner of the Wirral Affordable Housing Accelerator Programme. This was with a view to reflecting the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with Registered Providers to increase housing supply, respond to housing pressures and support regeneration. The process would utilise the Strategic Land Disposal Framework which had been developed for this purpose. This framework ensured disposals align with:

- The Wirral Housing Strategy 2026-2031;
- The Wirral Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030;
- The Homes England Social & Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) 2026-2036; and
- The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority SAHP Principles.

Members considered proposals for the disposal of a first tranche of six surplus council-owned sites to Registered Providers through the Council's affordable housing partnership framework, with the aim of accelerating the delivery of affordable homes, reducing homelessness and increasing housing opportunities for residents on the housing register.

During discussion, Members welcomed the initiative, sought assurances around delivery timescales, legal safeguards, nomination rights and the use of the sites to meet local housing needs, and officers confirmed that partnership agreements, conditions on disposals and ongoing collaboration with Registered Providers would help ensure the developments support the Council's housing priorities.

Resolved – that

1. **the disposal of Council-owned land through a Strategic Housing Partnership, under the Wirral Affordable Housing Accelerator Programme as referenced in paragraph 3.5 of the report be endorsed.**

2. **the progression of the identified tranche of sites using the Strategic Land Disposal Assessment Framework be approved;**

3. **authority to approve the allocation of individual sites to a preferred Registered Provider partner be delegated to the Director of Capital Programmes and Assets in accordance with the agreed framework assessment and disposal process as summarised at paragraph 3.5 of the report.**

23 **NETWORK STRATEGIC PARTNER FOR WIDE AREA NETWORK DELIVERY AND SUPPORT**

The Director of Corporate Services introduced a report which sought approval to award a contract for the continued provision of the Council's Wide Area Network (WAN), which was the network connecting council buildings, systems and services, together with telecommunications services, including internet-based telephony (Voice over Internet Protocol, VoIP), cloud connectivity and associated managed support services.

These services underpinned critical Council operations, including corporate systems, customer contact channels, closed-circuit television (CCTV), connectivity with partner organisations, cloud-based platforms and frontline service delivery. These services were fundamental to the operation of the Council, and any loss or degradation would have a direct impact on the delivery of services to residents.

The current contract expired in January 2027. Due to the lead-in time required to provision network connections, mobilise services and ensure continuity, a decision was required during 2026 to avoid service disruption and associated operational risk. Failure to make a timely decision in 2026 would risk insufficient time to put alternative arrangements in place before contract expiry.

Over recent years, the Council had moved from separate networks supporting Information Technology (IT) systems, CCTV and traffic management to a single integrated strategic network. This had created a more resilient, efficient and scalable platform supporting all major Council services. This integrated approach improved resilience, simplified management, enhanced security and provided a consistent platform for future service development.

The proposed contract would maintain continuity of critical network and telecommunications services, provide managed connectivity across approximately 400 sites, and support the Council's cloud transformation programme. It would also enable secure connectivity to partner organisations, including health and emergency services, and would allow services to be increased, reduced or modified in line with changing operational requirements. In addition, the contract would include structured governance,

performance monitoring and formal contract management arrangements. The proposed approach represented value for money through the use of competitively benchmarked framework pricing, avoidance of significant transition costs and the continued return on previous infrastructure investment.

The proposed contract duration was five years, with the option to extend for up to three additional periods of one year, giving a maximum duration of eight years. The proposed contract term reflected the long-term nature of network infrastructure investment and provided stability during the Council's transformation programme, while extension options ensured flexibility and future decision points. The proposed contract ensured continuity of these essential services while maintaining cost control and supporting the Council's wider digital and transformation objectives.

This report supported the delivery of the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023–27, particularly the theme of an Efficient, Effective and Accessible Council.

This was a Key Decision affecting all wards.

Resolved – That Policy and Resources Committee authorises the award of a contract to The Networking People (TNP) Ltd for the provision of Wide Area Network services, telecommunications services, internet-based telephony, cloud connectivity and associated managed support services via the Crown Commercial Services Network Services 3 Framework (RM6116), Lot 1a, for a period of five years with the option to extend by up to three one-year periods, with an estimated maximum contract value of £6.2 million based on an 8-year term. .

24 **TRANSPORT FOR THE CITY REGION RESOURCE FUNDING**

The Interim Director of Operations submitted a report which updated the Committee on discussions that had taken place recently with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) regarding additional staffing resources required to enable Wirral Council to successfully deliver the Transport for the City Region (TCR) funding programme from 2027-2032.

The report sought endorsement that the section 151 officer accepted the awarded funding aligning it within the capital programme to support the delivery of the Transport for the City Region Programme 2027-2032 and that the Interim Director of Operations in consultation with relevant Chair and Spokespersons be authorised to amend the delivery of the programme according to relevant resources.

As well as supporting the delivery of the LCRCA Local Transport Plan (LTP), the delivery of the TCR programme would contribute to the strategic

objectives of Birkenhead 2040, the Highways Network Management Plan, the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, the Places for People Strategy and Strategy and the Council's Road Safety Plan 2023-2027.

Resolved – that,

1. **the request that had been submitted to the Liverpool City Region to support the delivery of the Transport for the City Region Programme 2027-2032, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.**

2. **authority be delegated to the Interim Director of Operations, in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee to amend the delivery of the resource programme, having regard to the final allocation of the value of the grant and the subsequent prioritisation of those grant resources required to ensure programme delivery.**

25 **PARKING STRATEGY REFRESH**

The Interim Director of Operations introduced a report which sought members' approval to undertake a comprehensive review of the current Parking Strategy for Wirral with the aim of adopting a refreshed strategy that aligned with wider council policy.

Members debated the balance between providing certainty for businesses and residents and ensuring that the parking strategy review remained comprehensive, with comments covering economic growth, tourism, environmental considerations, residential parking, and the potential impact of parking charges on local communities and town centres.

Councillor Mountney proposed a motion seconded by Councillor Green which added additional wording to the officer recommendations contained in the report as follows:

Insert additional recommendation (3):

(3) Instruct the interim Director of Operations to exclude the 25 currently free to park areas from the review referred to in (2) above (22 car parks and 3 promenades) ending the ongoing uncertainty for our local businesses. Many of the 25 areas have businesses that are already struggling with the effects of the rise in the cost of living. In addition, potential new businesses are unable to plan or invest in these areas due to the current uncertainty regarding parking charges. Businesses and residents alike need some breathing space now; some help with the cost of living.

Further to a debate and a brief adjournment to clarify wording, Councillor Mountney withdrew his original motion and a composite motion was moved by Councillor Angie Davies, seconded by Councillor Mountney that,

Insert additional recommendation (3):

(3) Instruct the interim Director of Operations to exclude the 25 currently free to park areas from the review ***in relation to any introduction of car parking charges, which is*** *referred to in (2) above (22 car parks and 3 promenades) ending the ongoing uncertainty for our local businesses. Many of the 25 areas have businesses that are already struggling with the effects of the rise in the cost of living. In addition, potential new businesses are unable to plan or invest in these areas due to the current uncertainty regarding parking charges. Businesses and residents alike need some breathing space now; some help with the cost of living.*

Furthermore, the policy can be reviewed in light of the new council plan and our drive for economic growth and the strong role for tourism and the visitor economy.
Following the challenges to the local plan and threat to the greenbelt, no brownfield site including car parks can be excluded in any future thinking.

Further to a vote on the amendment it was,

Resolved – that,

1. **The resolution of the Environment, Climate Change and Transport Committee in March 2026 be noted, which resolved that: "The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee agrees that the proposals to implement car parking charges in relation to the Council's off-street car parks, as set out in the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods, be referred to Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration and a decision in relation to the recommendations."**
   and that no decision should be taken to proceed with the implementation of these recommendations until the Council's Parking Strategy had been refreshed and updated to align with the Council's wider policies and strategic objectives.

2. **The Interim Director of Operations be instructed to undertake a comprehensive review of the current Parking Strategy for Wirral and to submit a further report to this Committee with a proposed refreshed strategy for consideration and adoption.**

3. **The interim Director of Operations be instructed to exclude the 25 currently free to park areas from the review in relation to any introduction of car parking charges, which is referred to in (2) above (22 car parks and 3 promenades) ending the ongoing uncertainty for our local businesses. Many of the 25 areas have businesses that are already struggling with the effects of the rise in the cost of living. In addition, potential new businesses are unable to plan or invest in these areas due to the current uncertainty regarding parking charges. Businesses and residents alike need some breathing space now; some help with the cost of living.**

   Furthermore, the policy can be reviewed in light of the new council plan and our drive for economic growth and the strong role for tourism and the visitor economy. Following the challenges to the local plan and threat to the greenbelt, no brownfield site including car parks can be excluded in any future thinking.

26 **PRIDE IN PLACE**

The Director of Corporate Services introduced a report which provided an overview of the Government's Pride in Place Programme of which three areas of Wirral had been identified to benefit. The report included an update on the progress made to date in implementing the Programme in Wirral and set out the arrangements and ongoing support provided by the Council as Accountable Body, to the nominated communities that would benefit from the Pride in Place funds.

The areas of Woodchurch, Seacombe and Central Birkenhead had been selected by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to receive up to £20m of funding each as part of the Pride in Place Programme (Phase 2). The Programme is a UK-wide initiative providing a 10-year investment to disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
The Committee discussed the Council's role as the accountable body for funding and governance, including oversight of procurement and expenditure, and noted that while the programme is separate from the Birkenhead Town of Culture bid, opportunities for collaboration may be explored by the respective boards; the recommendations were subsequently approved.

Resolved – that

1.

   a. **the receipt of up to £20m for each of the nominated areas of Woodchurch, Seacombe and Central Birkenhead from MHCLG as part of the Pride in Place Programme be noted; and**
   b. **the role of the Council as accountable body for the Pride in Place Programme be noted.**

2. **the Director of Corporate Services be authorised, in consultation with Chair and Party Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee, to oversee implementation of the Pride in Place Programme including:**

   a. **making all the necessary arrangements to receive funding as provided by MHCLG;**
   b. **agreeing with MHCLG and any of the 3 Neighbourhood Boards an extension to the boundary of a nominated Pride in Place area;**
   c. **taking all the necessary steps to support the Neighbourhood Boards, including the approval of Terms of Reference, engagement plans and change control processes;**
   d. **allocating funding to third parties as required to implement the Pride in Place Programme, including establishment and convening of Neighbourhood Board meetings, and entering into any necessary legal agreements to enable this;**
   e. **entering into contracts as required to support implementation of the Pride in Place Programme; and**
   f. **following approval of the Pride in Place Plan by the Neighbourhood Board for the three respective areas, approving and submitting to MHCLG the Pride in Place Plans.**

3. **whilst it retains the role of Accountable body, up to 6% of the total grant be utilised to cover the Council's programme management costs in relation to its role and function as Accountable Body.**

27 **EDSENTIAL BUSINESS PLAN 2026-27**

The Director of Corporate Services introduced a report which invited Edsential CIC (Edsential) to set out its current position, its view of the immediate future and steps that it proposes to take to continue trading successfully and compliantly.
Edsential reported that, despite ongoing pressures on school funding, rising employment and food costs, and uncertainty surrounding future PE funding arrangements, the underlying business remained financially stable, with a small surplus forecast and plans to reduce and ultimately repay its working capital facility over the next three years.

During discussion, members praised Edsential's contribution to schools and communities, highlighted the importance of swimming and water safety education, and expressed concern about the proposed centralisation of PE funding and the potential impact on local service delivery. Questions were also raised regarding staff pay, school funding pressures, and financial performance, with officers providing assurance on cash management, future loan repayments and the organisation's commitment to reinvesting resources into services for children and young people.

Resolved – that the draft business plan for 2026-27 be approved.

28 **EXTERNAL REGENERATION REVIEW UPDATE**

The Chief Executive brought forward a report which provided this Committee with an update on progress against the External Regeneration Review Action Plan which was first presented to Committee in December 2025.

In May 2025, the Leader outlined a wish for the Council's regeneration activity to be reviewed independently. Relying on delegated powers, officers secured the services of Aughton Lane and an Officer Decision Notice was published accordingly in July 2025.

The review undertook an objective assessment of both the Council's overall approach to regeneration and the delivery status of a number of key projects and considered evidence from documentation and stakeholder engagement and was structured around five themes: vision and leadership, partnerships and governance, programme and project management, alignment of activity, and organisational capacity and capability.

The findings and recommendations of this review were presented to this Committee, which resolved to accept them and request that the Interim Chief Executive bring forward a detailed action plan which was presented to Committee in December 2025. The action plan set out short, medium, and long term measures to reset the regeneration programme, strengthen governance, and align ambitions with financial realities.

Members were informed that progress had been made across all action areas, with the main delay relating to the recruitment of a permanent Executive Director of Place and interim arrangements being pursued.

Clarification was sought on the future role of the Wirral Growth Company and ongoing discussions with Muse; officers advised that further details or options would be reported back once those discussions had concluded.

Resolved – that,

1. **the progress made to date in implementing the External Regeneration Review Action Plan be noted; and**
2. **progress against the action plan be monitored until completion.**

29 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 (2026/27)**

The Director of Finance introduced a report which provided an update on the Capital Programme as at the 30 June 2026. It recommended that the Committee agreed the revised 2026/27 Capital Programme of £122.920

million, which took account of re-profiling, virements, additional funding requirements and grant variations.

During discussion, members sought clarification on capital allocations, including the removal of funding for parking payment machines and proposed investment in Eastham Day Centre.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council the approval of:

1. **the revised Capital Programme of £122.920 million for 2026/27.**

2. **additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.8 of the report.**

30 **2026/27 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (THE PERIOD TO 30 JUNE 2026)**

The Director of Finance brought forward a report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 1 (30 June 2026) of 2026/27. The report adopted a by-exception approach, focusing on the most significant forecast variances, delivery of budget savings, implementation of immediate in-year mitigations, and any issues requiring further management action or Member attention.

At Quarter 1, the Council was forecasting an adverse variance of £3.794m against a net revenue budget of £495.223m.

The most significant variance related to Adult Social Care, particularly the cost of care packages. Management action is underway to reduce the impact of rising care costs, with the actions set out in this report.

The Quarter 1 forecast adverse position was manageable in-year; however, this would require reliance on one-off backstop measures that would reduce future financial resilience and weaken the Council's longer-term sustainability. These measures would therefore only be considered at year-end, should operational efficiencies and corrective actions be insufficient to fully mitigate forecast adverse variances.

The priority remained to minimise reliance on one-off resources, including Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), noting that any underspend that may be achieved in-year would reduce the Council's requirement for EFS and the associated ongoing borrowing costs. As per the approved Medium-Term Financial Strategy, financial stability must come first; decision-making must prioritise restoring and maintaining financial stability, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and affordability criteria before discretionary spending

The financial year 2026/27 continued to present a challenging environment. As such, budgets must continue to be actively managed, with prompt in-year action taken where adverse trends emerge. During discussion, members sought assurance on procurement and budget management arrangements, the accuracy of forecasts and the adequacy of reserves, while emphasising the need for close monitoring of financial pressures across all committees

Resolved – that,

1. **the adverse forecast revenue position for Quarter 1 of £3.794m be noted,**
2. **the in-year efficiencies and corrective actions intended to address and improve the financial position during 2026/27 be noted,**
3. **the progress on delivery of the 2026/27 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted,**
4. **the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1 be noted,**
5. **the budget virements set out in paragraphs 3.15 to 3.17 of the report be noted.**

31 **POLICY & RESOURCES WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee stated that the Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Members agreed to a request asking officers to explore the feasibility and cost of providing free family swimming sessions during the summer holidays, with any decision to be progressed urgently if viable.

Resolved – That the proposed Policy and Resources Committee work programme be noted.

32 **REFUSE COLLECTION & STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT AWARD**

The Director of Operations spoke to a report, which provided for consideration of the recommendations of the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in respect the Refuse Collection & Street Cleansing Service Review.

The full minute of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on Monday 15 June 2026 and associated Report of the Director of Resources was attached to the report.

Members considered the referral from the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and noted that the refuse collection and street cleansing contract award followed an extensive procurement, scrutiny and consultation process, with officers recommending contract award and progression of depot acquisition arrangements.

During discussion, members sought assurance on value for money, contract review arrangements and future waste collection options, while others welcomed the improvements proposed under the new contract and praised the thorough work undertaken by officers; the recommendations were subsequently agreed by assent.

Resolved – that,

1. **A new contract for the provision of refuse and recycling collection and street cleansing services within Wirral on an 8 year contract (with the option to extend for a further 8 years) commencing on 27 August 2027 be awarded to Biffa Waste Services Ltd (Biffa) as the Most Advantageous Tenderer pursuant to a Competitive Flexible Procedure with a maximum total estimated contract value of £348.6m based on a 16-year term be approved;**

2. **The Director of Operations be authorised to negotiate and finalise terms for:**

    a. **Ancillary contractual arrangements to be entered into with Biffa to bring Dock Road South Depot up to the necessary standard for the purposes of a new contract at an estimated cost of £1.9m; and**
    b. **The acquisition by the Council of Dock Road South depot at the estimated acquisition cost as set out in the exempt Appendix 3 to the report on terms that enable Biffa to continue to operate at the depot for the purpose its own commercial waste operations by way of lease back or analogous arrangements.**

33 **WIRRAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2026-2031 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Assistant Director introduced a report, which provided for consideration of the recommendations of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in respect of the Wirral Housing Strategy 2026 – 2031 Implementation Plan.

The full minute of the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee of Tuesday 16 June 2026 and associated Report of the Director of Corporate Services was attached.

Members noted the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan and welcomed its focus on increasing housing supply, improving housing quality, reducing carbon emissions, supporting vulnerable residents and strengthening homelessness prevention, with progress to be monitored through regular updates and a performance dashboard.

During discussion, members highlighted the positive impact of housing and health interventions, sought assurance on the resourcing and pace of delivery, and queried work to bring empty homes back into use, with officers outlining existing support and initiatives; the recommendations were then agreed.

Resolved – That the report be noted

34 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

35 **EXEMPT APPENDICES - REFUSE COLLECTION & STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT AWARD**

Committee noted the exempt appendices to the report.

Resolved – That the exempt appendices be noted.

36 **EXEMPT APPENDIX: EDSENTIAL BUSINESS PLAN 2026-27**

Committee noted the exempt appendix to the report.

Resolved – That the exempt appendix be noted.

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 August 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Kelly (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Gardner	KJ Williams
		J Walsh-McDonald	C Cooke
		L Luxon-Kewley	H Gorman
		B Kenny	G Bennett
		GJ Davies	P Jobson

14 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed Members of the Planning Committee, Officers, members of the public and those watching the webcast to the meeting.

15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Steve Foulkes. Councillor Paul Jobson was in attendance as a Substitute.

16 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

The Senior Planning Manager declared a personal interest in relation to item 5 (APP/25/00915 - Kingsmead Swimming Pool, Carlton Lane, Hoylake, CH47 0LL) as his spouse was the Case Officer for this application and to prevent any potential conflict of interest he subsequently left the meeting for this item.

17 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 16 July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

18 **APP/25/00915 - KINGSMEAD SWIMMING POOL, CARLTON LANE, HOYLAKE, CH47 0LL**

The Development Manager Team Leader presented the report of the Assistant Director - Chief Planner in relation to the above application. The application proposed the change of use of the building and land from a former Kingsmead Private School swimming pool, annexe buildings and teaching rooms (Use Class F1) to a new leisure and wellness facility with a mixed use and cafe space, Class F2 and Class E (Amended plans received to provide additional parking and access to parking from Bertram Drive).

A representative of the objectors addressed the committee and was questioned by Members.

A representative of the Applicant and the Applicant addressed the committee and was questioned by Members.

Members debated the application and raised issues in relation to on-site car parking.

The Chair moved and Councillor Jason Walsh-McDonald seconded a motion to defer the application.

Members debated the motion.

The motion was put to a vote, and it was:

Resolved (unanimously) – That consideration of the application be deferred to enable the applicant to discuss with Planning Officers the scope to put in an amendment to the application to deal with issues in relation to on-site car parking.

19 **APP/26/00584 - LAND ADJACENT TO WALLASEY BEACH, NEW BRIGHTON**

The Development Manager Team Leader presented the report of the Assistant Director - Chief Planner in relation to the above application. The application proposed the seasonal siting of containers providing an entertainment venue, with associated seating, lighting, bars and food concessions, toilets and storage and all associated works, between April and September (inclusive) each year.

The Lead Petitioner addressed the committee and was questioned by Members.

The Applicant addressed the committee and was questioned by Members.

A ward Councillor, Councillor Ian Lewis addressed the committee.

Members debated the application.

On a motion by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny, it was:

Resolved (unanimously) – That for the reasons set out in the report, the Assistant Director - Chief Planner be authorised to approve the application subject to the conditions set out below.

Conditions:

1. **The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.**

2. **The use of the land for the purposes hereby permitted shall only take place between 1 April - 30 September inclusive and at no other time.**

3. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed as follows:**

- **‘Proposed Beach Side Outdoor Bar Area Existing Site and Location Plan’, Drawing No: 2025-14-01 (B) [Dated: 09/09/2025]**

- **‘Proposed Beach Side Outdoor Bar Area Proposed Site Plan and Elevations’, Drawing No: 2025-14-02 (E) [Dated: 09/09/2025]**

4. **All containers, fencing, structures, enclosures and other temporary infrastructure associated with the use of the land shall not be placed on the land any earlier than 7 days before 1st April during each calendar year, and all such containers, fencing, structures, enclosures and temporary infrastructure shall be removed from the site within 7 days of 30th September during each calendar year.**

5. **The development hereby permitted shall not be open to the public at any time outside the hours of 11:00 – 20:00.**

6. **No servicing, including deliveries and waste disposal, shall take place outside the hours of 09:00 – 21:00.**

7. **Within 6 months of the date of permission, full details of 2no. Information boards relating to the sensitive features of the National and International sites adjacent to the application site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

   The details shall include responsible visitor codes on how to protect the relevant sites and shall include the location of where the boards will be sited.

   The boards, as approved, shall be installed prior to 1st April 2027 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be retained and maintained in good condition thereafter.

8. **The following reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) shall be undertaken during the construction phase of the development each year:**

   - **Prior to site establishment, a pre-work check for reptiles will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist;**

   - **All areas of deep windblown sand will be checked to ensure reptiles are not present sheltering or basking;**

   - **In the event that a reptile is recorded, they will be left to leave the site on their own accord or where required, translocated to dune vegetation at least 50 m from the site to the south (to be predetermined and agreed with the landowner); and**

   - **Where a reptile is seen, all work must stop and an ecologist consulted.**

9. Prior to installation of any external lighting, a lighting design strategy for biodiversity for the developed area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

a. identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and

b. show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the approved strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

10. The Site Management Plan (Site Management Plan, Revision B – August 2026 [Submitted 05/08/2026] or any revised version approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be adhered to at all times when the site is in use as an entertainment venue each year.

11. Within 6 months of the date of permission, a detailed scheme for the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour during non-opening times shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The approved measures shall be implemented at all times during each trading season thereafter.

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	P Basnett (Chair)	
	Councillors	J McManus	T Murphy
		R Molyneux	M Skillicorn
		S Mountney	G Jenkinson
		K Hodson	E Lamb
		S Bennett	M Booth
		A Davies	J Johnson
		S Foulkes	P Gilchrist
		H Raymond (in place of C Carubia)	V Wilson (in place of I Lewis)
		N Graham (in place of J Bird)	P Jobson (in place of S Powell-Wilde)

37 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

38 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Chris Carubia, Ian Lewis, Jo Bird, and Sue Powell-Wilde.

Councillors Helen Raymond, Naomi Graham, Vida Wilson and Paul Jobson were in attendance as substitutes.

39 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Naomi Graham declared a personal non-pecuniary interest by virtue of working for an organisation that rented property from the Council.

40 **MINUTES**

Councillor Simon Mountney requested that the attendance record be amended to note the apologies of Councillor Ian Lewis and the attendance of Councillor Jeff Green as substitute member.

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2026 be approved as a correct record with the above amend.

41 **PEAK CLUSTER - LICENCE AGREEMENT TO ACCESS COUNCIL LAND**

The Assistant Director: Property and Investment reported that the Council had been approached by Peak Cluster, who proposed to capture carbon at four major cement and lime manufacturing facilities in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, requesting that the Council grants a licence to allow them and their agents to conduct surveys over Council land. Due to the resolution of Council of 9th March 2026, the matter had been referred to the Committee to consider.

During the debate, members highlighted public concern about the project, the large volume of correspondence received from residents, concerns about environmental, safety and visual impacts, and the importance of reflecting the strong opposition previously expressed by both the Council and local communities. Members acknowledged that refusing the licence would not materially delay the project but agreed that doing so would send a message of opposition and demonstrate solidarity with residents affected by the proposals.

Councillor Kathy Hodson made a declaration that she was pre-determined in relation to this matter so did not take part in the vote.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Skillicorn it was,

Resolved (18:00) – that the Policy and Resources Committee does not agree the granting of a licence to Peak Cluster to progress a number of surveys on land set out in appendix 1 of the report.

42 **REVENUES & BENEFITS – REPLACEMENT OF ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EDMS) AND FUTURE PROCUREMENT APPROACH FOR THE REVENUES & BENEFITS CORE SYSTEM**

The Head of Business Applications stated that the existing contract for the Revenue and Benefits Document Management System was due to expire in December 2027, shortly followed by the core Revenue and Benefits System in March 2028.

As part of the ongoing Business Application review linked to the Council's Digital Transformation priorities including a cloud first approach, a requirement had been identified to replace the existing document management system as it was approaching end-of-life and has no cloud-native upgrade path.

This provided the opportunity to review the end-to-end system offer for Revenue and Benefits and a Soft Market Testing exercise had been undertaken to enable better understanding of the current market offer for an

integrated Revenues and Benefits and Electronic Document Management System.

Members were informed that two market leading suppliers offered an integrated end-to-end solution encompassing both the core Revenue and Benefits functionality and document management requirements which had engaged and provided detailed responses as part of the Soft Market Testing. These had demonstrated a strong alignment with the Council's objectives for cloud adoption, automation, customer self-service, document management and service transformation.

The market engagement exercise had reinforced the need and benefit of replacing the current document management system and reviewing core capabilities to ensure an enhanced digital customer experience, reducing the requirement for manual processing which could cause delays and impact recovery.

Members sought assurance that the proposed migration of the revenues and benefits document management system would be delivered securely, without loss of data or disruption to services, while officers highlighted the benefits of moving to a single supplier, including improved integration, easier upgrades, stronger contract management and support for wider digital transformation.

The committee also discussed future IT strategy, staffing impacts, project resources and cost controls, ultimately agreeing to proceed with the procurement process subject to further details being reported to the Finance Working Group.

Resolved – that the Director of Corporate Services be authorised to undertake a procurement process to award a new contract for an integrated Revenues and Benefits System covering the core processing activity and document management.

The award will be via a compliant framework for an initial 5-year contract term with 2 further options to extend in each case for 3 years at an estimated contract value totalling an estimated £4.825m being an estimated contract value of £400k p.a. and one-off implementation expenditure estimated at £0.425m for the full 11-year contract term, plus in-year contract inflation, and as detailed in section 4 – financial recommendations.

43 **CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE**

The Insurance, Risk and Business Continuity Manager provided an update on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR), which has been reviewed following internal assessments and audit recommendations. Key changes include

clearer roles and responsibilities, improved processes for escalating risks, alignment with strategic objectives, and new guidance on the use of AI in risk management, while further work is underway to refine the council's risk appetite and bring updated proposals back to the committee.

Members noted the report and were advised that risk management training is available to all councillors.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

44 **RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND RISK APPETITE UPDATE**

The Insurance, Risk and Business Continuity Manager provided an update on the council's Risk Management Framework, highlighting revisions to strengthen risk governance, including clearer roles and responsibilities, enhanced risk escalation processes, alignment with strategic objectives, and new guidance on the use of AI in risk management. Members were advised that further work is underway to refine the council's risk appetite and that updated proposals, along with any consequent amendments to the framework, will be brought back to the committee following consideration by the Executive Leadership Team.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

45 **COMPLIANCE IN THE ESTATE - UPDATE**

The Assistance Director for Property and Investment introduced a report which provided an update for the Committee relating to the Council's land and property following submission of a report to the committee in March.

The implementation of the Corporate Landlord Model along with other work has revealed several key issues within the estate that needed to be addressed. The report provided an update on the actions taken to address these issues.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

46 **UPDATE ON LEASING OF SOLAR CAMPUS TO OASIS CHARITABLE TRUST**

The Head of Service for 14-19 Strategy presented a report which provided an update on the transfer of the Solar Campus site, Leasowe Road, Wallasey ("the Solar Campus") to Oasis Charitable Trust.

The Policy and Resources Committee – 11th March 2026 – supported the decision to declare the Solar Campus a surplus asset and to progress

negotiations to transfer the site including granting early access from April 2026.

The Oasis Village Wirral would see the creation of a multi-agency education, health and community hub designed to support children and young people struggling with attendance, behaviour, SEMH needs (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health), and those at risk of exclusion. Wirral faced persistent challenges such as low educational outcomes, high SEMH demand, pupil exclusions, and significant child poverty.

The proposed approach would see the Oasis Charitable Trust develop and operate a Wirral Village at the Solar Campus on an initial temporary 2-year lease, followed by a further longer-term lease.

Members welcomed the project, recognising its potential to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people and deliver savings to the council, and agreed to support the proposals subject to further financial and business case details being reported to the Finance Working Group.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

47 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee reported that the Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

The committee the work programme, noting a correction to a report date and requesting further information on the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan, the Target Operating Model and the Corporate Risk Register, with updates to be added to the future work programme.

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Resolved – the report be noted.

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Kelly (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Foulkes	GJ Davies
		A Gardner	C Cooke
		J Walsh-McDonald	H Gorman
		L Luxon-Kewley	G Bennett
		P Stuart	A Ainsworth

20 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members of the Planning Committee, Officers, members of the public and those watching the webcast to the meeting.

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Jerry Williams and Brian Kenny. Councillors Paul Suart and Ann Ainsworth were in attendance as substitutes.

22 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Jason Walsh-McDonald declared a non-pecuniary, personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item six, (APPH/26/01027 - 5 Woodcote Bank, Higher Bebington, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH42 4NL) as he had a close personal connection with a number of residents in Woodcote Bank, and to prevent any potential conflict of interest he subsequently left the meeting for this item.

The Senior Planning Manager declared a personal interest in relation to item five (ADV/26/00958 - Corner of Duke Street and Beckwith Street, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 8BB) as his spouse was the Case Officer for this application, and to prevent any potential conflict of interest he subsequently left the meeting for this item.

23 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 13 August 2026 be approved as a correct record.

The Chair suggested changing the order of the agenda to hear item six (5 Woodcote Bank, Higher Bebington, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH42 4NL) as the last item on the agenda. This was agreed by assent. The minutes remain in the order of the agenda.

24 **ADV/26/00958 - CORNER OF DUKE STREET AND BECKWITH STREET, BIRKENHEAD, WIRRAL, CH41 8BB**

The Senior Planning Manager left the meeting room.

The Development Management Team Leader presented the report of the Assistant Director - Chief Planner in relation to the above application. The application proposed a digital advertisement board with a maximum sunrise to sunset luminance level of 2,400cd/m2 and maximum sunset to sunrise luminance level of 300cd/m2.

A ward Councillor, Councillor Elizabeth Grey addressed the committee.

Members debated the application.

The Chair moved and Councillor Steve Foulkes seconded a motion to refuse the application.

The motion was put to a vote, and it was:

Resolved (unanimously) – That the Assistant Director - Chief Planner be authorised to refuse the application, due to its proposed illuminance levels and its location on a complex junction, which would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety by distracting motor vehicle users and would fail to accord with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and policy WS 9 of the Wirral Local Plan.

25 **APPH/26/01027 - 5 WOODCOTE BANK, HIGHER BEBINGTON, BIRKENHEAD, WIRRAL, CH42 4NL**

Councillor Jason Walsh-McDonald left the meeting room.

The Chair noted that the Scheme of Delegation advised that in the event the Elected Member who called in the application does not register their attention to speak to the item, then consent may be sought from the committee to withdraw the agenda item to enable it to be determined under Officer delegation.

Resolved – That the Planning Committee was content for the application to be withdrawn from the agenda and returned to Officer delegation.

26 **APP/26/00691 - LIGHTHOUSE INN, 228 WALLASEY VILLAGE, WALLASEY, WIRRAL, CH45 3LP**

The Senior Planning Manager returned to the meeting room.

The Development Management Team Leader presented the report of the Assistant Director - Chief Planner in relation to the above application. The application proposed a temporary construction compound, in association with proposed works carried out by United Utilities as a wastewater statutory undertaker for the construction of an underground storm water detention tank.

A ward Councillor, Councillor Ian Lewis addressed the committee.

The applicants addressed the committee and were questioned by Members.

Members debated the application.

On a motion by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes, it was:

Resolved (unanimously) – That for the reasons set out in the report, the Assistant Director - Chief Planner be authorised to approve the application subject to the conditions set out below.

Conditions:

1. **The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.**

2. **The use hereby permitted must be discontinued within 15 months of the commencement of the development hereby permitted. Any items (including but not limited to cabins, hard standings, stockpiles of materials, equipment and machinery), associated with the use hereby permitted must be removed from the land on or before that date.**

3. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:**

   80065626-RPT-51071-NA-DR-C-00006-Rev-P09-Proposed-Site-Plan

4. **The external materials of the cabins and fencing hereby permitted shall be in accordance with those shown in:**

   Sandy Lane Welfare Cabin Details
   Sandy Lane CSO Welfare Compound Fencing Examples

5. **No development shall commence until details of existing and proposed ground levels and finalised details of the proposed boundary treatment scheme, including the height of the boundary fencing, have been submitted to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority in writing. Thereafter, the approved ground levels and Boundary Treatment Scheme approved within this condition shall be implemented in full for the duration of the development.**

6. **The Welfare Cabins of the development hereby permitted shall be installed at the ground level approved under Condition 4 of this permission only and no cabins shall be stacked on top of each other or installed on any raised platform.**

7. **The Dust Control and Topsoil Management measures described in:**

   QF3225 Site Environmental Control Plan - Sandy Lane CSO_2026-08-27 (02) Sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.2a shall be implemented in full for the lifetime of the temporary use hereby permitted.

8. **The Tree Protection Measures described in: WIR0059SO Sandy Lane Arboricultural Method Statement shall be implemented in full for the lifetime of the temporary use hereby permitted.**

9. **Prior to six weeks after the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a Landscape Restoration Scheme including a timetable of works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

   The approved landscaping scheme shall include:

   Planting Plans
   Phasing for Landscaping Scheme implementation and completion, including the proposed remediation of the land after the temporary use has ceased and all items have been removed from the land in accordance with condition 2 attached to this permission.

   All planting, seeding and/or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out no later than the first planting and seeding seasons following the demobilisation of the site, and any trees, shrubs, hedges or plants which within a period of five years from the occupation of the site die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

10. **The following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) shall be undertaken during the construction phase of the development hereby permitted: 1. Existing vegetation on the site will be gradually cut and removed under ecological supervision to encourage any amphibians to move away from the affected areas; 2. The working area, together with any storage areas, will be kept clear of debris, and any stored materials will be kept off the ground on pallets so as to prevent amphibians from seeking shelter or protection within them; and 3. Any open excavations (e.g. foundations / footings / service trenches etc) will be covered with plywood sheeting (or similar) at the end of each working day. The edges of these sheets will be covered with a thick layer of topsoil or similar) to prevent (amphibians/mammals) from seeking shelter beneath them. Any excavation must be in-filled and made good to ground level with compacted stone or similar at the earliest opportunity, so as to remove any hazard to amphibians/mammals.**

11. **No shrub or hedgerow felling is to be carried out on the site between 1 March and 31 August in any year. If it is necessary to undertake works during the bird breeding season then all buildings, trees, scrub, hedgerows and vegetation are to be checked first by an appropriately experienced ecologist to ensure no breeding birds are present. If present, details of how they will be protected are required to be submitted for approval.**

12. **The Red Fox Translocation Scheme:**

Red Fox Translocation Scheme Dated 28/08/2026 shall be implemented in full prior to any works taking place on the site and shall be adhered to for the lifetime of the temporary use herby permitted.

13. **The Invasive Species measures described in:**

    QF3225 Site Environmental Control Plan - Sandy Lane CSO_2026-08-27 (02) Section 4.6.1 shall be implemented in full for the lifetime of the temporary use hereby permitted.

14. **No development shall commence until a Bat Lighting Scheme for the developed area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall: a. identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and b. show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.**

15. **The Highways Safety and Waste Management mitigation measures within the red edge and described in:**

    Car Park Management Plan Rev B (005) Sandy Lane Lighthouse Public House Sections 3-8 shall be implemented in full for the lifetime of the development.

16. **The site will not be bought into first use until finalised details of security arrangements have been submitted to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority in writing. Thereafter the approved security arrangements shall be implemented at all times throughout the lifetime of the temporary use hereby permitted.**

27 **APP/26/00814 - GROVE HOUSE HOTEL, 45 GROVE ROAD, WALLASEY VILLAGE, WIRRAL**

The Senior Planning Officer presented the report of the Assistant Director - Chief Planner in relation to the above application. The application regarded full planning consent for the change of use of the premises to a hostel on a permanent basis.

A ward Councillor, Councillor Ian Lewis addressed the committee.

The applicant’s agent addressed the committee.

Members debated the application.

On a motion by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewley, it was:

Resolved (unanimously) – That for the reasons set out in the report, the Assistant Director - Chief Planner be authorised to approve the application subject to the conditions set out below.

Conditions:

1. **The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.**

2. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority and listed as follows:**

   'Existing -Location Plan', 2096-ABWA-XX-00-DR-A-(00)0001 Rev P01, received 1st July 2026;

   'Proposed Cycle Provision', 2096-ABWA-Z1-ZZ-DR-A-(38)0100, received 1st July 2026; and

   'Proposed - Floor Plans', 2096-ABWA-Z1-ZZ-DR-A-(20)0100, received 1st July 2026.

3. **There shall be no more than 18 rooms with a maximum of 36 residents provided at any time, in accordance with the details submitted and shown on plan reference; 'Proposed - Floor Plans', 2096-ABWA-Z1-ZZ-DR-A-(20)0100.**

4. **The approved cycle parking showing on submitted drawing 'Proposed Cycle Provision', 2096-ABWA-Z1-ZZ-DR-A-(38)0100 shall be implemented and made available for use within 3 months of the decision date of the development and shall thereafter be retained.**

28 **APP/26/00418 - NORTHCROFT, 282 - 284 TELEGRAPH ROAD, HESWALL, WIRRAL, CH60 7SG**

The Development Management Team Leader presented the report of the Assistant Director - Chief Planner in relation to the above application. The application proposed demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuilding and the proposed erection of 5No. apartments, together with single storey outbuilding to provide 5No. garages, and associated landscaping, improved access, parking, refuse and cycle storage (amended description and drawings).

The applicant’s agent addressed the committee and was questioned by Members.

Members debated the application.

Resolved (unanimously) – That for the reasons set out in the report:

1. **The Assistant Director – Chief Planner be authorised to approve the application subject to the following conditions and subject to the completion of an agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 to be prepared, in accordance with section 8.10 of this report**

2. **That the Assistant Director-Chief Planner be authorised to refuse the application in the event that a satisfactory section 106 agreement is not received within 6 months of the date on which Planning Committee resolve to approve the application unless an extension of time is agreed to the satisfaction of the Assistant Director-Chief Planner in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Planning Committee.**

Conditions:

1. **The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than [3] years from the date of this decision.**

2. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 18 August 2026 and listed as follows:**

   1008.P12.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P13.B (dated 18.08.2026)

   1008.P14.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P15.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P16.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P17.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P18.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P19.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P21.A (dated 23.07.2026)

   1008.P23.A (dated 23.07.2026)

3. **No development shall take place until a Sustainable Drainage Strategy and associated detailed design, management and maintenance plan of surface water drainage for the site using SuDS methods, and demonstrating that the sustainable drainage hierarchy has been followed, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved drainage system shall be implemented in accordance with the approved Sustainable Drainage**

Strategy prior to the use of the building commencing and maintained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

4. **No development above ground floor level shall take place until full details of swift bricks for nesting birds has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details**

5. **No development involving the use of any facing materials shall take place until full details (including samples, where required) of the materials to be used in the construction of external surfaces of the building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

6. **Prior to first occupation of the dwelling(s) hereby approved, full details of the alterations to the side boundary wall (facing Poll Hill Road) including materials and finishes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The alterations to the side boundary wall shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved and retained as such thereafter.**

7. **Prior to first occupation of the dwelling(s) hereby approved, full details of secure, lockable and covered cycle parking and/or storage facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

   These facilities shall be provided in accordance with the approved details and made available for use prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall be retained for use at all times thereafter.

8. **Prior to first occupation of the development, full details of the photovoltaics' design, appearance and the method of installation on the garage roofs shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of each dwelling.**

9. **Apartments 4 and 5 hereby approved shall not be occupied until full details (including materials and height) of the privacy screens to the southeast facing side elevation of the balconies have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority The privacy screens shall be installed in accordance with the approved details, before the first occupation of apartments 4 and 5 and thereafter shall be retained**

10. **The flat roof of the development herby permitted (with the exception of the balconies as shown on drawing 1008.P14.A dated 23.07.2026) shall not be used as a balcony or similar outdoor amenity area.**

11. **The development hereby approved shall be carried out with finished floor levels and surrounding ground levels across the site in accordance with the levels shown on the approved Proposed Site Plan (dwg no. 1008.P13.B), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the relevant works.**

12. **The landscaping plan (dwg no. 7630.01 dated April 2025) included at Appendix B of the submitted Landscape Management Plan (TBA Landscape Architects dated March 2025) shall be carried out no later than the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s) or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner.**

    Any trees, shrubs, hedges or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of development die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

13. **As a precautionary measure the following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) are required to ensure that the site is kept unattractive to terrestrial mammals during construction works and to minimise any harm to terrestrial mammals which may be present in the vicinity:**

    - **A pre-commencement check for terrestrial mammals;**
    - **Work only allowed between 8am and 6pm;**
    - **Any holes or trenches dug during the course of construction works and left open overnight must provide a means of escape (e.g. a ramp) for any animal which may fall in;**
    - **Any temporary exposed open pipe system should be capped in such a way as to prevent terrestrial mammals gaining access whilst the contractors are off-site; and**
    - **Materials used during the construction works, especially those containing lime, should be stored away from terrestrial mammals pathways so that terrestrial mammals cannot access them**

14. **No tree felling, scrub clearance, hedgerow removal, vegetation management, ground clearance and/or building works is to take place during the period 1 March to 31 August inclusive. If it is necessary to undertake works during the bird breeding season then all buildings, trees, scrub, hedgerows, and vegetation are to be checked first by an appropriately experienced ecologist to ensure no breeding birds are present. If present, details of how they will be protected are required to be submitted for approval.**

15. **The development hereby approved shall be carried out in full accordance with the Arboricultural Method Statement as set out at Appendix 5 of the submitted 'Tree Solutions' Arboricultural Impact**

Assessment (dated April 2025) and the accompanying Tree Protection Plan at Appendix 4 at all times during construction.

16. **100% of the dwellings hereby approved shall be accessible and adaptable (in accordance with M4(2) of the Building Regulations).**

17. **The dwellings hereby permitted shall incorporate water efficiency measures to achieve usage of no more than 110 litres of water per person per day under Part G of Schedule 1 and regulation 36 of The Building Regulations 2010. No occupation of any dwelling shall take place until a Building Regulations assessment confirms that the development has been constructed in accordance with Part G of Schedule 1 and regulation 36 of the Building Regulations 2010 for water efficiency and has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority.**

18. **The measures outlined in the Digital Connectivity Statement (dated April 2026 by MF Architecture) shall be adhered to in full.**

ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Monday, 14 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	M Skillicorn (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Gardner	A Hodson
		GJ Davies	A Davies
		J McManus	JE Green
		P Cleary	G Jenkinson
		H Raymond	P Jobson

21 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website for two years.

22 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

23 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

24 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

25 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

25.1 Public Questions

The Chair reported that 3 public questions had been received.

Andrew Warwick, a resident of Tranmere, asked a question regarding the condition of the Castle Hotel site at the entrance to the Queensway Tunnel, describing it as a significant eyesore and asking whether the Committee had assessed the damage it caused to perceptions of regeneration in the borough.

In response, the Chair advised that the Council had not undertaken a formal assessment of the impact of the former Castle Hotel site on regeneration. However, it was acknowledged that vacant and derelict buildings can negatively affect the appearance of an area and perceptions of investment. Whilst the site was not currently included within the Council's regeneration programme, wider regeneration opportunities across the borough were under review. The Chair further noted that the most recent planning application for redevelopment of the site had been refused on heritage and design grounds. Measures undertaken by the site's management company in 2025 had also improved security, with no subsequent reports of unauthorised access or anti-social behaviour received.

The Lead Principal Lawyer read out a question on behalf of Graeme Nuttall regarding housing growth in the Eastham and Bromborough area. Referencing the housing capacity identified within the Wirral Core Strategy and housing completion figures contained within the Council's Annual Monitoring Report, it was stated that a significant number of homes had already been delivered within the area, with further developments either completed, under construction or proposed. In his submitted question, Mr Nuttall asked whether a cumulative infrastructure and Habitats Regulations assessment had ever been carried out across all five sites together, rather than individually.

In response, the Chair advised that housing allocations contained within the Wirral Local Plan 2022-2040 had been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and consideration of infrastructure requirements through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The Chair further advised that housing proposals not identified within the Local Plan were treated as windfall developments and, whilst not assessed through the plan-making process, would be considered through the planning application process, with cumulative impacts assessed where required by Local Plan policies, national planning policy or legislation.

The Lead Principal Lawyer read out a question on behalf of Katie Dillon regarding the management of savings arising from projects funded through the Local Regeneration Fund. Reference was made to the decision to progress the lower-cost Bebington Road scheme and clarification was sought regarding the mechanisms for monitoring project savings and whether any such savings would be reported to the Committee before being reallocated.

In response, the Chair advised that any savings identified once project budgets have been finalised would be reported to the Committee, and any proposed reallocation of funds would be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation. The Chair further advised that the Committee had previously resolved that any underspend should, in the first instance and subject to the necessary approvals, be considered for allocation to the Duke Street Public Realm Scheme and Pacific Road

Scheme. Any re-allocation falling outside that delegated authority would be referred back to the Committee for consideration.

25.2 **Statements and Petitions**

The Chair reported that 2 requests to make statements in respect of Item 6, Dominick House, were reported.

Councillor Graeme Cooper, making his statement, expressed appreciation on behalf of local ward councillors or the work undertaken by Members and officers to develop a solution to the long-standing issue of the derelict building. He noted that the proposed acquisition of the leasehold interest and subsequent transfer of the site to the owners of the Cherry Tree Centre offered an opportunity to bring the site back into beneficial use, support wider regeneration objectives, improve the appearance of Liscard town centre and address ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour and public safety associated with the vacant property.

The Lead Principal Lawyer read out a statement on behalf of David Fox, Co-Head of Retail Agency at Colliers and Asset Manager for the Cherry Tree Centre. The statement highlighted the detrimental impact that the long-term vacancy and deterioration of Dominick House had on the town centre environment and public safety. It was noted that discussions with the Council had progressed towards a transaction that would enable the Cherry Tree Centre owners to acquire the site, assume responsibility for its security and pursue demolition of the building, subject to the necessary consents. The statement further noted that the intention was to improve the visual and physical environment of the site and continue working with the Council to support future regeneration and town centre improvements.

25.3 **Questions by Members**

No member questions were received.

26 **DOMINICK HOUSE, LISCARD**

The Assistant Director – Property and Investment introduced the report which outlined a proposed back-to-back transaction to address the long-standing issue of Dominick House, Liscard. It was reported that the proposal would involve the surrender of the existing leasehold interest and the subsequent disposal of the site to the owners of the adjacent Cherry Tree Centre. It was advised that, whilst the transaction was complex, it represented the most viable opportunity to secure a positive outcome for the site, avoid significant demolition costs to the Council and support the wider regeneration of Liscard Town Centre.

Members welcomed the proposals and recognised the extensive work undertaken by officers, local ward councillors and other stakeholders in seeking a resolution to an on-going issue. Members considered the financial implications of the transaction, the basis of the proposed land valuation, and the extent to which the Council's interests would be protected should the site be redeveloped in the future. The Assistant Director explained that the cost of demolishing the building exceeded the value of the land itself and that the proposal would remove a significant liability whilst delivering wider regeneration benefits for the area. Members further considered the risks associated with the proposal, including the absence of any guarantee that redevelopment would follow the completion of the transaction. It was advised that there was a clear commercial incentive for the proposed purchaser to bring the site forward and their stated intention to demolish the building and improve the area was noted.

Resolved – That

1. **the Director of Capital Programmes and Assets be authorised to approve that the acquisition of the leasehold interest in Dominick House, Liscard from Prospect Estates Ltd be subject to the onward disposal of the Council's interest in Dominick House, Liscard to the receivers of Cherry Tree Trustee One Limited and Cherry Tree Trustee Two Limited on a back-to-back basis such transaction to be substantially in accordance with the draft heads of terms as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;**

2. **the Head of Legal Services be authorised to finalise the necessary legal documentation and conclude the back-to-back transaction arising from the above resolution.**

27 **LOCAL REGENERATION FUND-GOVERNANCE**

The Lead Principal Lawyer introduced the report of the Director of Corporate Services which reported on future governance arrangements for the Local Regeneration Fund. It was reported that the Council had been the accountable body for the Fund since September 2025 and that the programme was due to conclude on 31 March 2028. The report followed a previous Committee resolution requesting proposals for future governance arrangements and recommended that grant funding decisions continue to be considered by the Committee, or any future relevant decision-maker, in consultation with the Director of Finance and in accordance with applicable Fund guidance.

Members sought clarification on future decision-making arrangements, including the role of any future projects would need to align with regeneration objectives, programme outcomes and delivery timescales. The Committee noted the importance of maintaining appropriate Member oversight of future

funding executive decision-maker and discussed the process for identifying and developing projects within the programme. Concerns were raised regarding extent to which stakeholders were aware of opportunities to bring forward proposals. In response, the Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer explained that given the limited time remaining within the programme, current focus was on delivering agreed priorities to ensure funding was fully utilised and that any decisions would need to align with regeneration objectives, programme outcomes and delivery timescales.

Resolved – That future decisions regarding grant funding pursuant to the Local Regeneration Fund continue to be considered by the Economy, Regeneration & Housing Committee or relevant decision maker pursuant to any future governance arrangements in consultation with the Director of Finance and otherwise in accordance with the applicable Local Regeneration Fund guidance.

28 **HOUSING UPDATE**

The Assistant Director of Housing Services presented the first formal progress report following approval of the Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan. The report provided an update on delivery against the five strategic housing priorities and highlighted progress in increasing affordable housing provision, improving housing conditions, supporting energy efficiency measures, meeting the housing needs of older and vulnerable residents, and preventing homelessness.

Members were advised that 1,845 homes had been delivered against the housing delivery target, including 657 affordable homes, that further affordable housing developments were progressing, and that positive outcomes were being achieved through enforcement activity, disabled adaptations, energy efficiency programmes and homelessness prevention initiatives. It was further reported that temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast use had reduced significantly and that future reports would include a performance dashboard linked to national and local housing outcomes.

Members welcomed the report and thanked the housing teams for their work. Members discussed several matters highlighted within the report including the implementation of new housing legislation, continued pressures arising from homelessness and housing affordability, and the importance of maintaining delivery of affordable and social housing. Members highlighted the positive reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast placements, sought further information on housing delivery targets, the operation of the private rented sector, the impact of energy-efficiency programmes and the availability of Disabled Facilities Grant funding.

In response, the Assistant Director provided further detail on homelessness prevention measures, partnership working with registered providers and

health services, progress in improving housing standards and energy efficiency, and the challenges associated with future housing delivery. Members noted the continued demand for housing within the borough, the pressures facing both the social and private rented sectors and the importance of maintaining momentum in delivering the priorities set out within the Housing Strategy.

Resolved – that the report be noted and endorsed.

29 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the report on behalf of the Chair which set out the committee work programme. It was reported that the work programme was formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

Members sought assurance regarding the timing of forthcoming reports, including updates on the Birkenhead Market project and the development of the Council's Economic Strategy. Requests were made for engagement with the Committee and relevant stakeholders ahead of the approval of the Homelessness Strategy, and officers confirmed that workshops and consultation opportunities would take place to support the development of key policies. Members noted the explanations provided regarding future reporting arrangements and the alignment of economic growth and regeneration priorities across the Council's programme of work.

Resolved - That the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year be noted.

30 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

31 **DOMINIC HOUSE - EXEMPT APPENDICES**

Resolved – That the exempt appendices be noted.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Powell-Wilde (Chair)	
	Councillors	E Tomeny	G McManus
		C Povall	C Walsh-McDonald
		Cooper	K Murphy
		B Hall	G Bennett
Apologies	Councillors	P Gilchrist	T Jones

26 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

27 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tony Jones and Councillor Phil Gilchrist.

28 **MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

29 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

30 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

30.1 **Public Questions**

The Chair informed Members that 20 public questions had been received.

The first question was on behalf of Canna-Fam asking whether the committee would consider using the Canna-Fam company for training adult social care and public health teams.

The Chair responded to state that the Council had not identified a specific requirement for training in this area. It was noted that should evidence emerge that additional guidance or workforce development was needed this would be considered through the Council's normal processes alongside other identified training priorities.

As a supplementary question on behalf of Canna-Fam, Peter Spencer asked whether the Council would be open to receive additional information. The Chair agreed to this and asked for the information to be sent to the Senior Officer.

The second question was asked on behalf of Wirral Green Party who queried what had been done to improve access to dentistry for Wirral residents and what still needed to be done including estimated timescales for completion.

The Chair responded to say that the commissioning of dentistry services sat outside the remit of this Committee. A written response would be requested from the NHS Integrated Care Board for Cheshire and Merseyside as they were responsible for dentistry services.

As a supplementary question on behalf of Wirral Green Party an explanation was sought as to why dentistry was outside the remit of a Committee relating to Public Health with a healthcare scrutiny role.

The Chair stated that the Health and Wellbeing Board would have oversight of this and advised that the question be taken to them.

The third question was received from Christine Brie and asked whether the current day services could be re-designed to reflect the excellent provision that they provided and whether the Council could celebrate the good work that takes place.

The Chair responded to say that the Council recognised and valued the important role that day services had played in supporting residents over many years. However, as needs and expectations changed the Council must ensure that the services continued to provide high quality person centred support for the future. The intention was to modernise and develop the existing offer to provide greater choice and expanding opportunities while building on the strengths and support already in place.

The fourth question was asked by Sarah Turner on behalf of Christina Lennon who queried how the Council could do up the day centre buildings when the Council did not have any money.

The Chair acknowledged that the Council faced significant financial challenges and there would need to be prioritisation and difficult decisions in order to remain financially stable. It was explained that investment was

planned into Eastham to enable the Day Centre to support high needs and the ambition was that it would complement Pensby Wood. Other Day Centres had a routine and reactive maintenance programme which the facilities management team would prioritise when repairs were needed.

The fifth question was asked by Susan Smale who queried whether Wirral Evolutions was able to recruit to its vacant posts as a statutory service being exempt from the recruitment freeze.

The Chair responded to state that the Council continued to face significant financial challenges and were obliged to demonstrate that they were doing everything to support a sustainable financial plan. Wirral Evolutions was not a statutory or registered service. The service delivered support for persons under the Care Act. Representations were regularly made to the Council's Human Resources and Recruitment team to prioritise cover and recruitment on a case by case basis. Where essential to service delivery exemptions were made.

Susan Smale asked a supplementary question regarding the reported 16 percent vacancy rate within the service and sought clarification of the anticipated timescales for recruiting permanent staff to fill vacant posts to reduce reliance on agency workers, given the additional costs associated with agency staffing arrangements.

The Chair responded to state that the question would be referred to the relevant officers to provide a detailed response within seven working days.

The sixth question was asked by John Daulby who asked whether Dale Farm could apply to be on the framework.

The Chair responded to clarify that all providers, Charities and Voluntary Community Faith groups could apply to be on the framework and the procurement was on the Council's procurement site the "CHEST".

John Daulby asked a supplementary question regarding whether the Council would continue to support the co-production approach that had been developed over the previous 18 months, including the work undertaken with local stakeholders and service users. It was suggested that co-production had been effective in improving services and reducing pressure on Council resources.

The Chair responded to state that a written response would be provided within seven days.

The seventh question was asked on behalf of Unison regarding the recommendation for Option 2 following the consultation and asked for an

estimate of proportion of people who would have access to day services stopped, or reduced, if these proposals were accepted.

The Chair responded to state that Option 1 was effectively do nothing and this was not a viable option as highlighted in previous committee discussions. Options 2 and 3 allowed the needs of the current day services users to be met whilst also allowing the Council to ensure that it further developed the offer. The duty to consult was used to inform recommendations and decisions and other factors also had to be considered. The Council needed to develop sustainable solutions to the challenges it faced and become more resilient. Every person supported would receive a new review and assessment to ensure that their care plan reflected their needs, choice and was personal to them. The overall aim was to deliver better services and outcomes for Wirral residents. The needs and demand for services for the most vulnerable residents was increasing year on year and the Council had to ensure that it was planning for both the now and the future.

A supplementary question was asked by Helen Kane on behalf of Unison about why restrictions had been placed on staff so that they could not handle cash more than once a week which limited access to community-based options and how there could be confidence that the number of people accessing Day Services will be reduced.

The Chair responded that a written response would be provided within seven days.

The eighth question was received from Clare Young who was extremely happy with the outcome of the public consultation and option 2 being the recommendation, but asked what assurances there were that when the personal reviews took place, the whole offer would be shared with individuals and sought assurance that individuals and their carers/advocates would have the option to continue to use current day services.

The Chair responded to say that the Council had made a commitment to work closely with the people they care for, their parents, carers, and advocates. When the personal reviews are undertaken care needs would be tailored to requirements under the Care Act for personalisation. The full offer in accordance with the persons needs would be discussed, including Direct Payments, to support the person in making the best decisions for them. The Commissioning Framework was seeking to help the Council develop a better offer overall offering more choice, activities, and freedom to design a personal programme. The new service offer would build on the Day Centre provision that already existed and are provided directly by the council and hoped to improve choice and independence.

The ninth question was received from Peter Linnane and asked what specific safeguards would protect continuity of staff, peer relationships, familiar

routines, trusted environments and respite for carers where these were important to an individual's well-being.

The Chair responded that the consultation highlighted the importance placed on managing change and the Council intended to ensure that change was managed with the people the Council care for, their parents and carers in a collaborative way. Co-production would be used to jointly work on the future solutions.

The tenth question was received from Valerie Brown who asked for a guarantee that all the existing centres would remain open and whether the sale of Highcroft Day Care Centre would be part of the second phase.

The Chair responded that the only decision on day services was the one in the report at Committee today. The Council was duty bound to demonstrate value for money in the use of its resources in the face of growing demand and this included how assets were used and maintained. The Council was recommending working closely with its residents in a collaborative way to co-produce future services and solutions and aspired to continuously deliver the best outcomes for residents.

The eleventh question was received from Sheena Hennell and stated that the carers group welcomed Option 2 and were delighted that the Council wished to continue to work with them in co-production known as the Reference Group. The Retain and Refocus was welcomed but it was asked if the strap line could be Keep and Make Even Better instead.

In response, the Chair stated that the Council was committed to working with residents through co-production and the Council was grateful for ideas. It was important to ensure that this journey continued with the reference group and that time was set aside to plan and programme how to discuss and develop the important issues so that recommendations could be brought forward for decision in a planned way.

The twelfth question was received from Ian Young and asked for confirmation that those in supported living would continue to have access to day services to the same extent as currently.

The Chair responded to confirm that every person supported by the Council would have a new review and assessment that would identify a personal plan tailored to their needs. This would include assessing the need for day services alongside other services and activities and the plan would reflect each person's needs.

The thirteenth question was received from Alison Avery who thanked those who worked hard to enable the consultation on the future and modernisation of Wirral's Adult Day Services provision to take place and asked what assurances could be given that the chosen option would be properly and adequately funded.

The Chair responded that investment was being made to improve Eastham Day Centre to be able to support high needs. The Council was currently out to procure a new framework to deliver a broader and better offer for day opportunities and had invested to ensure that every person supported received a new review and assessment. The Council's focus was on modernisation, building better resilience, choice and independence for Wirral residents to experience better outcomes. The Council had an obligation to ensure it was demonstrating value for money and to deliver a sustainable financial plan.

The fourteenth question was received from Paul Eggleton who requested confirmation that the proposed implementation of Option 2 and then Option 3 meant that no current attendee at a Wirral Evolutions centre would be forced to move to another centre or HUB going forward without their or their carers agreement.

In response the Chair stated that Care plans would be informed by a new review and assessment to ensure that a personalised plan would be tailored to the needs of the person being cared for. It was hoped that the broadening and improvement of the day opportunities offer would allow every resident to make more informed personal choices.

The fifteenth question was received from Norman Bradshaw who asked if Wirral Evolutions would be allowed to spend their budget, as a statutory service being exempt from the spending freeze.

The Chair responded that Wirral Evolutions was not a statutory or registered service. It was a service that delivered support for persons assessed under the Care Act. There was no spending freeze on the agreed budget for Wirral Evolutions. All Council services were expected to demonstrate value for money, keep within budget and make a contribution if savings were required.

The sixteenth question was received from Joan Wright who asked how elected members were going to enhance the current provision for adult day services, whether the term Retain and Refocus could be altered to 'Keep and Make Even Better' and whether the Council would support future partnerships such as Leisure Services and the Floral Pavilion or local business such as Unilever.

The Chair responded to state that the question was similar to question 11 and the same principle applied. The Council wished to work with residents to co-produce and develop the services together. The Council welcomed exploring every partnership and opportunity that would bring improvement and support the aspiration to give Wirral residents more choice, opportunity and independence.

The seventeenth question was received from Susan Eggleton and asked why Option 3 was being proposed as a further change once Option 2 had been fully implemented, in accordance with wishes of the clear feedback from the

Consultation process in which the vast majority of respondents put Options 1 and 2 as their first or second choice.

The Chair responded that Option 1 was effectively to do nothing which was not a viable option as highlighted in previous committee discussions. The Chair added that Options 2 and 3 would meet the needs of the current day services users whilst also allowing the Council to further develop the offer.

The eighteenth question was received from Richard Avery and asked for confirmation that there would not be any "efficiency" targets for Day Services during the re-design.

The Chair responded to state that the Council had limited resources and demand for services continued to increase year on year. Whatever services the Council developed for the future there was an obligation to demonstrate value for money, efficiency and sustainability, whilst providing a more tailored person-centred approach.

The nineteenth question was received from Robert James Wright who asked whether the Council had any sites in mind, where any of the day services could be co-located, as part of the re-design.

The Chair responded that the Council aimed to work with residents to co-produce future development of the service and this journey would take time. The Council were commissioning a new framework of providers and were keen to expand and broaden the offer for day opportunities and activities. There had been reference to other assets in the Borough such as the Floral or leisure centres and it was hoped that more residents could experience and have access to the best facilities and activities in the Borough.

The twentieth question was received from Andrew Smith who asked if Dale Farm Trust could apply to be on the framework.

The Chair responded to state that all providers, Charities and Voluntary Community Faith groups could apply to be on the framework. The procurement was on the Council's procurement site the 'CHEST'.

30.2 **Statements and Petitions**

No statements or petitions were received.

30.3 **Member Questions**

No member questions were received.

31 **IMPROVING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE RECEIVING DAY CARE**

The Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning introduced the report which stated that the Council's vision was to support individuals with

care and support needs to live fulfilling lives, with choice, independence, and control at the heart of our approach. The report sought approval for a phased modernisation of adult day services in Wirral, aligning provision with national policy and local ambitions to promote independence, wellbeing and community inclusion. The proposals would gradually move from a predominantly building-based model towards a blended, more personalised day opportunities offer, while retaining specialist support for people with complex needs.

The recommendations were informed by extensive consultation with over 600 stakeholders, which highlighted the importance of retaining valued services, trusted relationships and safe environments while expanding community-based opportunities and choice.

The case for change was clear with expected improvement of independence, wellbeing, community participation and employment opportunities, greater choice and control, a stronger community support market, and sustainable specialist provision for those with high and complex needs.

The Council would work closely with the people they cared for, their carers, parents and stakeholders to co-produce and develop the service together. The Director of Adults Health and Strategic Commissioning reported that the future of Adult Day Services was about making a difference and delivering better outcomes for the people of Wirral. The aim was to ensure that Wirral had the best services for its most vulnerable people both now and in the future. At the heart of this was to help people who draw on care and support to live fulfilling lives. All the residents of Wirral had the right to participate in what Wirral had to offer, irrespective of whether they had a disability.

Most peoples ambitions and aspirations were to be able to participate as much as the next person and not be judged or restricted by the opportunities available to them. This was the ambition of Wirral Council.

It was reported that 571 people currently accessed day services, with a mixed model already in place comprising both in-house and commissioned provision. Members were advised that some existing day service buildings required significant future investment and that the proposals sought to improve service resilience, sustainability and outcomes for service users.

It was highlighted that extensive engagement had been undertaken, including a 12-week public consultation which received 602 responses. Feedback highlighted the importance of social connections, friendship groups and community participation. It was reported that the preferred approach was to retain and refocus existing services as the first phase of a longer-term programme, maintaining specialist building-based provision for those with complex needs while gradually expanding community-based opportunities, volunteering, employment pathways and personalised support. Members

were informed that all service users would receive an individual review and assessment, with changes implemented gradually through co-production with service users, carers and stakeholders. It was further noted that success would be measured through improved independence, wellbeing, choice and community inclusion, with the overall aim of delivering a modern, sustainable service that continued to meet the needs and aspirations of residents.

Members raised concerns regarding the impact of the proposals on friendship groups, community connections and existing support networks. In response, the Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning confirmed that individual assessments, transition planning and ongoing reviews would be used to identify and address any issues arising from changes to services, and that future provision would be co-produced with service users and providers. He also advised that the Council would continue to develop a wider range of community-based opportunities through a new commissioning framework, while maintaining appropriate support for those with more complex needs.

Members sought assurance that implementation would be based on individual need and delivered within a realistic timescale. The Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning confirmed that person-centred assessments and reviews would form the basis of all future support arrangements, with approximately 1,000 reviews planned for the affected cohort and completion currently expected by March 2027. He further advised that the proposals were intended to support the long-term sustainability of Adult Social Care services, increase choice and flexibility through Direct Payments and community-based provision, and ensure that suitable building-based services remained available where required.

Cllr Powell-Wilde moved and Cllr Povall seconded the officer recommendation.

Cllr Ewan Tomeny then moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Craig Walsh-McDonald, that the Committee agree the officer recommendations 1 and 4 with the deletion of recommendations 2 and 3 and with the following additional wording:

“3. Request that the Director of Adult Social Care and Strategic Commissioning brings back a further report to a future committee with a financial analysis and a vision for all current buildings and staffing.”

The above amendment was then put to the vote and it was lost (3:6).

The original motion was then put to the vote and it was,

Resolved (6:3) – that

1. The findings of the public consultation on the Redesign and Transformation of Adult Day Services be noted;

2. **A phased approach of modernisation from Day Services to Day Opportunities by 31 March 2028, commencing with Option 2: Retain and Refocus in the first 12 months be approved;**

3. **Authority be delegated to the Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning to take all necessary actions to implement the phased modernisation programme, as set out in paragraphs 3.21 to 3.24 of the report, and**

4. **The commitment to work closely with the people being cared for, their carers, parents and stakeholders to ensure that the offer was developed using the principles of co-production and collaborative working be endorsed.**

32 **COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS FOR ETHNIC MINORITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES**

The Acting Assistant Director of Public Health presented the report of the Director of Public Health which sought agreement to progress a procurement exercise for ethnic minority services from April 2027. The current services were experiencing increasing demand, supporting residents and communities with a wide range of issues. The report set out the proposed procurement process and funding model including use of the Public Health Grant, given the strong links between the service outcomes, and improved population health.

The proposal was for a contract worth up to £900,000 over a three year period which was approximately £300,000 per annum. It was funded through the Public Health Grant as an initial two year contract with an option to extend for a further year. The recommission had been based on an extensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in 2026 that looked into the health needs of our asylum seeker and refugee populations, but also a system-wide workshop that was held in June 2026 with a wide range of key partners and stakeholders. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment identified several barriers faced by asylum seeker refugees in Wirral's ethnic minority communities, including language, social isolation, discrimination, poor housing, and difficulties accessing healthcare. The recommission supported wider Council priorities around prevention, inclusion, community resilience and reducing inequalities.

The current Wirral model involved two separate contracts with two providers which had led to some duplication in delivery and fragmentation in the pathways for Wirral's communities. It was proposed to move to a single procurement commissioning framework with four specific lots which were community outreach and engagement, asylum seeker and refugee support, community health and wellbeing, and cultural awareness and inclusion training.

The proposed lotting approach had been developed to create a more coordinated and flexible model of support which was intended to increase accessibility to the procurement process for the wider voluntary community and faith sector organisations. It was reported that providers could bid for a maximum of two lots that best aligned with their expertise and skills and capacity rather than being required to deliver a whole programme of work. Assurance was given that the future contracts would include a clear outcomes framework with providers required to demonstrate delivery against agreed performance measures linked to reducing health inequalities, improving access to services and strengthening community resilience. Contract management arrangements would include regular performance monitoring, reporting and review meetings to provide assurances regarding delivery, quality and value for money.

Members queried how the recommissioned ethnic minority services would address gaps in the current provision, involve communities in service design and ensure accessibility. The Interim Assistant Director of Public Health explained that the new model would place greater emphasis on encouraging ethnic minority communities to access mainstream services through cultural awareness training for frontline staff, alongside a strengthened outreach approach to engage with dispersed migrant populations in their own communities. She advised that extensive qualitative engagement had been undertaken as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including consultation with both service users and non-users, and that this intelligence would continue to inform future commissioning and service redesign.

In response to questions regarding market engagement, the Interim Assistant Director of Public Health reported that eight responses had been received through a pre-market questionnaire, with interest expressed across all four service lots and from some providers not previously active within the Borough.

Members also sought assurance regarding the coordination of services, the availability of specialist immigration advice and the management of potential silo working between providers. Members were informed that local health and wellbeing support services continued to be well used by different communities and that the proposed lot structure aimed to create a more integrated service offer. The commissioning framework had been designed to promote collaboration between providers through shared performance measures, joint monitoring arrangements and referral processes, with all providers brought together through a single performance management framework to ensure effective communication and cross-working.

Resolved – That the Director of Public Health be authorised to:

1. **Proceed with a single procurement exercise for ethnic minority services with four service lots as referred to in paragraph 3.9 of the report;**

2. **Award each lot to the successful tenderer following the tender process in accordance with the Most Advantageous Tender criteria.**

33 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Assistant Director, Operational Delivery and Professional Standards presented the report of the Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning which provided a performance report in relation to Adult Social Care and Public Health for quarter one from April to June 2026. Overall, demand remained high across services, but there was evidence of progress in supporting people to live independently and strengthening some community-based care and improving alternative models of support. There was some levelling off and some reduction in long-term residential and nursing care placements in quarter one. Some of that was influenced by the population growth, increasing complexity of need and hospital discharge requirements. There was a shift towards independence and community-based care and the domiciliary care numbers had continually increased as more people were being supported to remain in their homes. The number of Direct Payments remained at 549. It was reported that 15 percent of people eligible for Direct Payments were in receipt of them and the aim was to increase this to 24 percent by the end of this financial year. There was positive growth in alternative care models and in Shared Lives, extra care in the community and the use of assistive technology. The vacancy rate in the care market was just under 6%. There was strong progress in supporting independence in the care market. High demand continued to provide pressure on Adult Social Care, particularly around residential and nursing care, where there were some significant challenges which required ongoing focus to address.

A Member sought clarification on the promotion of Direct Payments and raised concerns that information was not sufficiently visible within Day Centres and may not be accessible to all service users through online channels. The Assistant Director, Operational Delivery and Professional Standards reported that training had been delivered to Day Centre staff, including a recent workshop, and highlighted the launch of a new website and support from the People's Places Lives service to improve staff awareness and engagement. It was acknowledged that further work was required to strengthen communication and promotion of Direct Payments to those receiving support.

Members also sought clarification on Shared Lives arrangements and the distinction between Primary and Secondary Carers was explained. Members were advised that recruitment to Shared Lives remained active and that opportunities to expand provision would continue to be explored.

In relation to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), the Assistant Director, Operational Delivery and Professional Standards advised that a recent

judgement had resulted in activity being suspended whilst existing and new arrangements were reviewed and that clearer reporting was expected in future quarters.

Members also discussed the reported No Criteria to Reside (NCTR) rate, and the Assistant Director, Operational Delivery and Professional Standards noted that performance remained favourable compared to regional levels and highlighted the role of reablement services, Better Care Fund initiatives, Home First and Community Integrated Care Coordination in supporting discharge arrangements. The Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning reported continued high demand across acute services, increasing levels of frailty and complexity amongst patients, and growing demand for nursing and dementia-related placements. It was noted that winter preparedness planning was underway to help manage these pressures.

Resolved – That the content of the report be noted.

34 **ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT ON WIRRAL'S HEALTH PROTECTION STRATEGY 2023-2027**

The Assistant Director, Consultant in Public Health, and the Public Health Principal presented the report of the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the partnership work undertaken to date to deliver the Wirral Health Protection Strategy 2023-2027. This included protecting the health of Wirral's residents and communities from infectious diseases, environmental hazards and emerging health threats aligned with the ambitions set out in Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The delivery of the Health Protection Strategy 2023-2027, was coordinated around seven priority areas, with cancer screening added as an additional priority in 2025. The Assistant Director, Consultant in Public Health, and the Public Health Principal reported that partnership working continued to support the prevention of ill health, reduction of health inequalities and improvement of health outcomes. Key achievements included a coordinated response to local measles outbreaks, which helped minimise the impact of increased case numbers through enhanced preparedness, testing pathways and targeted vaccination communications. Improvements were also reported in cancer screening uptake, with breast cancer screening exceeding regional and national averages, bowel screening remaining above the North West average, and a successful cervical screening pilot delivered via the Living Well bus, which NHS England had confirmed would continue. Hospital admissions for urinary tract infections had reduced by 33.5% compared with 2018/19 levels and significantly exceeded the local target and reflected partnership work to improve hydration and promote appropriate antibiotic use. Further successes included winter preparedness campaigns, promotion of vaccination programmes, and a public health communications campaign that reached almost one million people online.

The Public Health Principal advised that work would continue to increase vaccination uptake, tackle antimicrobial resistance, reduce infection rates, support earlier HIV diagnosis and address health inequalities. Planned actions included infection prevention workshops, emergency preparedness exercises, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments on antimicrobial resistance and adverse weather resilience, and a comprehensive evaluation of the current strategy to inform the development of a refreshed Health Protection Strategy beyond 2027.

Members congratulated officers on the success of the UTI project and queried whether further work was required in areas such as microbial resistance and obesity. The Assistant Director, Consultant in Public Health stressed the importance of planning and preparedness for emerging public health challenges and highlighted antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as an area requiring further attention. It was noted that antibiotic use remained high in primary care and that a new post had been established at Arrowe Park.

Members queried the timeliness of some public health data, including TB, MMR and air pollution indicators. It was explained that while the report relied on publicly available data which was subject to rigorous quality assurance processes, more current non-public data was sometimes available locally. She advised that air pollution measures were based on public health outcomes data and that minor variations could occur between different datasets.

Members sought assurances regarding the impact of ongoing NHS and Integrated Care Board (ICB) changes on health protection arrangements and wider health services. The Assistant Director, Consultant in Public Health advised that delivery of the Health Protection Strategy relied on close collaboration with ICB colleagues and confirmed that dialogue was ongoing at both operational and senior levels. The significance of the changes and the importance of maintaining collaborative working was emphasised. The Director of Public Health advised that discussions were continuing to secure assurances that the ICB would maintain an active role and that further details would be shared once available.

The Chair welcomed the reported improvement in breast cancer screening uptake and requested additional information on this area.

Resolved – That the progress made to date in the implementation of the Wirral Health Protection Strategy 2023 – 2027 as set out in the report be noted.

35 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning introduced the

report which detailed the annual work programme of the items for consideration by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee.

It was agreed that the briefing note on Drugs and their Classification would be removed from the work programme.

Resolved – That subject to the removal of the above item, the proposed Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year be noted.

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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	M Booth (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Ainsworth	P Jobson
		A Brame	J Stewart Laing
		S Foulkes	E Tomeny
		P Martin	V Wilson
		H Gorman (in place of J Bird)	T Cox (in place of H Cameron)

26 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

27 APOLOGIES

Apologies for this meeting were given by:

- Councillor Bird. Councillor Gorman deputised.
- Councillor Cameron. Councillor Cox deputised.

28 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Steve Foulkes declared a non-pecuniary interest due to his role as Chair of the Transport Committee for Liverpool City Region.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7, due to his academic research in air quality and health.

29 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

30 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were four public questions, two statements and three petitions submitted to this meeting. No member questions had been received.

30.1 Public Questions

The Head of Legal Services (Interim Monitoring Officer) read out a question on behalf of Mr Graeme Nutall regarding the Bebington Road scheme. The question asked whether Members had been shown a recalculated cost for Option 1 before approving the lower-cost Option 2 and, if not, whether the Council would reconsider the decision now that the level of savings had been confirmed. The Chair advised that a written response would be provided.

The Head of Legal Services (Interim Monitoring Officer) read out a question on behalf of Ms Katie Dillon regarding the Bebington Road scheme. The question asked what weight had been given to the consultation results and whether the Council could confirm if the £5.7 million cost estimate had been re-tested against the procurement route before a decision was taken. The Chair advised that a written response would be provided.

Mr David Hill, on behalf of the Wirral Cycling Group, asked whether the Committee would contact Merseyrail regarding its proposed ban on legal e-bikes. The Chair advised that a cross-party letter had been sent expressing concerns about the proposal and urging reconsideration and noted that the issue had also been raised with the Metro Mayor, who opposed the ban.

Councillor Elizabeth Grey asked for reassurance that concerns relating to weed growth, blocked gullies and road sweeping were being addressed in Bidston and St James. The Chair advised that residential roads were cleansed on a 12-week cycle and that weed treatment works in the area were due to be completed by the end of the week, with any required retreatment undertaken at no additional cost to the Council.

30.2 Statements and petitions

Mr David Brewer, on behalf of the Wirral Cycling Group, made a statement in relation to Item 7, Wirral Air Quality Strategy and Annual Status Report Review 2026. He highlighted the importance of high-quality cycling infrastructure in supporting active travel, reducing transport emissions and improving road safety. He further noted that cyclists are disproportionately affected by poor road conditions and emphasised the role of safe, well-maintained cycling networks in encouraging sustainable travel choices.

Councillor Ian Lewis made a statement in relation to Item 6, Environmental Enforcement Contract – Permission to Tender & Award. He highlighted a recent fly-tipping incident in Wallasey and thanked officers for their prompt response in removing the waste and gathering evidence. He emphasised the importance of continuing to take robust action against environmental crime, including pursuing prosecutions for fly-tipping offences where appropriate.

Mr Pete Bioletti presented a petition containing 114 signatures, requesting that the Council work with residents to manage parking and enforce parking restrictions on Borrowdale Road and Cross Lane, Bebington. The Chair advised that a written response would be provided.

Mr Stuart Robinson presented a petition containing 16 signatures, requesting that the Council reduce the height of the evergreen hedges and trees along the rear boundary of Mount Primary School and adjacent gardens on Elleray Park Road. The Chair requested that officers arrange a further site visit in conjunction with local ward councillors.

Councillor Mark Skillicorn presented a petition in relation to Upton Pines parking and road safety. The Chair advised that requests for parking restrictions were prioritised based on factors such as collision history, obstructive parking and access issues. The parking enforcement team had been made aware of the concerns and would provide additional attention to the area where appropriate.

30.3 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions by Members.

31 **ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT – PERMISSION TO TENDER & AWARD**

The Head of Community Safety presented the report. It outlined the request to commence an open tender process for environmental enforcement services and upon conclusion, to award a two-year contact. The report had been developed in response to concerns raised by Members and residents regarding environmental offences, particularly dog fouling and littering across the borough. Members were advised that the Council's previous environmental enforcement contract had ended in 2019 by mutual agreement. The procurement process and contract specification had been developed to reflect lessons learned and to minimise the risk of issues previously experienced.

Members raised the following questions/ comments:

- Members queried what assurances would be in place should a significant number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) be overturned and if the contractor would still receive a fee.
- Members raised concerns regarding the incentive structure associated with the issuing of fines.
- Members asked whether Enforcement Officers would be clearly identifiable and highly visible when undertaking enforcement activities.
- Members sought clarification on whether engine idling and fly-tipping would be included within the scope of enforcement.
- Members asked if the Council was able to determine priority locations for enforcement.
- Members queried how the contractor would work with Merseyside Police and what links would be in place.
- Members highlighted the importance of effective communications.

Officers clarified that the proposed service would be based on fair and proportionate enforcement. Enforcement officers would be highly visible through branded uniforms and vehicles, with engine idling included within the scope of enforcement. Officers confirmed that fly-tipping would remain the responsibility of the Council, as this required more detailed investigative work. There would be a strong focus on public and business engagement alongside enforcement activity. Under the proposed model, the contractor would assume the financial risk associated with infrastructure, mobilisation and electronic systems and pay the Council a fee for each fixed penalty notice issued. Officers advised there would be a close relationship with the contractor, they would share intelligence and direct resources to priority areas. Members noted that a nominated Council officer would be involved in the complaints process. Officers further advised that they would be the link between the contractor and the police.

Following discussion, Councillor Booth proposed a motion in the same terms as the officer recommendation but with the additional words that the Director of Corporate Services consults the Chair and Spokesperson of the Committee prior to the contract award. The motion moved by Councillor Booth was seconded by Councillor Jobson and it was therefore –

RESOLVED – That the Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee:

1. Approves the initiation of a procurement exercise via an open tender process for environmental enforcement services; and
2. Authorises the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Committee to award the contract following completion of the procurement process and evaluation to the highest scoring tenderer based on the Most Advantageous Tendered criteria.

32 **WIRRAL AIR QUALITY STRATEGY AND ANNUAL STATUS REPORT REVIEW 2026**

The Team Leader – Climate Emergency and Air Quality introduced the report, which provided an update on the Air Quality Status Report (ASR), including actions taken during 2025 to improve air quality and monitoring results for air pollution. Members were advised that 56 actions had been identified for 2025, of which 14 had been completed and 42 were at the implementation stage.

Using DEFRA (The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) approved monitoring methods no exceedances of the national air quality objective levels had been identified, and no Air Quality Management Areas had been declared. Monitoring was undertaken during 2025 across 56 passive monitoring sites, three sites formed a co-location study and were not included in the results. Of the 46 sites in place for 2024 and 2025, six sites showed decreased concentrations and 30 sites had shown an increase in concentrations. Some of the increases and decreases were very small. There had been no exceedances of the national objective levels for nitrogen dioxide. It was noted that World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality levels were more stringent than the current national objectives, reflecting the scientific understanding that health benefits can be achieved by reducing pollution levels even when legal standards are already being met.

Members raised the following questions/ comments:

- Members commended the positive feedback from DEFRA.
- Members commented on the roll-out of the new bus services across Wirral, noting the vehicles were the highest grade of diesel and could be converted to electric vehicles in the future.
- Members asked whether increased tree planting in areas with higher levels of pollutants could help address some of the air quality concerns.
- Members queried what the future plans were for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Members asked for information on the potential expansion of the air quality app.
- Members asked whether the School Streets project had contributed to a reduction in emissions.
- Members welcomed the inclusion of the WHO comparison levels within the report.
- Members requested more information about the Clean Air Crew primary school project.

In response, officers advised that the air quality app formed part of a PhD research project and was currently being trialled. It was noted that the app provided useful information on indoor air quality and factors affecting it. An

Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure report would be presented at a future meeting of the Committee. In relation to the School Streets project, officers confirmed that monitoring data was currently being processed and would be reported in due course. Members were also advised that the Clean Air Crew project was being piloted at a small number of schools for one year, after which feedback would be sought to try to relaunch the project on a larger scale.

Resolved – That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee:

1. Notes the progress in 2025/26 contained within the Annual Status Report.
2. Notes the latest air quality monitoring results for 2025.
3. Acknowledges the progress with actions contained within the Air Quality implementation plan.

33 **TREE, HEDGEROW AND WOODLAND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT 2026**

The Landscape Manager (Tree Strategy) presented the report, which provided an update on the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy. The report highlighted progress in evidence-led tree risk management, ash dieback assessment, carbon and canopy reporting, community participation and public engagement. Officers advised that tree risk management had continued to strengthen through a borough-wide ash dieback assessment, with targeted works undertaken to address identified safety concerns. The 2025-26 planting programme had delivered a further 2.3 hectares of future canopy cover.

Members were informed that community involvement had grown through the Tree Warden Network, the creation of tree trails in five local parks and the launch of a new Sponsor a Tree scheme. The Council had retained its recognition as a Tree City of the World. Members were informed that priorities for the future included implementing the new woodland and park management plans, developing the community tree nursery at Dibbinsdale and increasing monitoring of pests, disease and the impacts of extreme weather.

Members raised the following questions/ comments:

- Members queried the impact of recent hot summers on newly planted trees and requested data on tree losses
- Members questioned the management and planting of hedgerows
- Members sought clarification on the ambition to increase canopy cover across the borough.
- Members thanked volunteers for their contribution to tree-related projects and initiatives.

- Members asked about the air quality benefits provided by trees
- Members queried how biodiversity net gain opportunities could be linked to specific tree planting projects within Wirral.
- Members sought assurance that an active tree management programme would continue

Officers responded that newly planted trees were regularly inspected and replaced where necessary, although in some cases replacement was not feasible due to factors such as severe vandalism. Hedgerows were also inspected as part of the Council's routine management programme. Members noted that a Forest Research study demonstrated that Wirral had one million trees and the annual target of planting 21,000 trees had been met in the first three years. Efforts were being targeted towards increasing tree canopy cover in areas affected by poor air quality. Work was underway to explore the establishment of a registered habitat bank to support biodiversity net gain opportunities. Officers confirmed that active tree management remained focused on public safety, with two full-time tree inspectors carrying out inspections across the borough and additional officers responding to reports of potentially dangerous trees from residents and Members. Resources were in place to enable immediate investigation where safety concerns were identified.

Resolved – That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee:

1. Notes the progress of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020 to 2030.
2. Endorses the priority actions for 2026/2027.

34 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair advised that a single hot house workshop session would be held to cover topics such as Pedestrian Crossings and School Streets.

A briefing note on the common issues relating to trees, including frequently asked questions and responses, was requested to assist Councillors in addressing residents' enquiries.

A request was made for the Pavement Parking Enforcement item to be brought to a Hot House session before the policy report is presented to Committee.

Resolved – That the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee notes the proposed Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Thursday, 17 September 2026

12 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone and read the webcast notice.

PRESENT:

Councillor Julie McManus	Chair
Matthew Bennett	Chief Executive, Wirral Council
Elizabeth Hartley	Executive Director of People, Wirral Council
Sayyed Osman	Director of Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning
Dave Bradburn	Director of Public Health, Wirral Council
Councillor Stephen Bennett	Wirral Council
Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde	Wirral Council
Councillor Ewan Tomeny	Wirral Council
Anthony Kirk	Director of Children, Family and Education, Wirral Council
Libby Eastley	Magenta Housing
Dr Abel Adegoke	Chair of Primary Care Group
David Hammond	Wirral Community Health & Care NHS FT
Andy Styring	CWP
Chris Lynch	CWP
Mark Wiggins	Merseyside Police
Karen Prior	Chief Executive, Healthwatch Wirral

Also present:

Liz Bishop	Chief Executive, ICB
Simon Garner	Wirral Council
Lisa Newman	Wirral Council
Katy Taylor	Wirral Council
Adrian Leach	Wirral Council
Vicki Shaw	Wirral Council
Christine Morley	Secretary

13 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ian Lewis.

14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interests.

15 **MINUTES**

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board of 20 July 2026 be agreed as a correct record.

16 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

A question was asked by Mr John Taylor-Brace as Chair of the Autism Group asking whether the Neurodevelopmental System Oversight Group could contact the Secretariat for the Autism Group, as part of their role was to oversee the implementation of the Autism Strategy and there could be potential for joint working.

The Chair thanked Mr Taylor-Brace for his proactive approach as Chair of the Autism Group. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion, Adrian Leach, would facilitate contact between the Autism and Neurodevelopment Group.

The Chair highlighted that the Health and Wellbeing Board would be changing and emphasised that the Board was a partnership in which every partner had an equal voice. The Chair stated that Neighbourhood health would be the main focus of the Board. The Board would deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy on behalf of Wirral's residents.

17 **PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2025/2026**

The Board received a presentation from the Principal Public Health Officer on the Public Health Annual Report 2025/26, which examined the relationship between housing and health outcomes in Wirral.

Members welcomed the report and discussed a number of housing-related issues affecting health and wellbeing, including deprivation, poor housing conditions, homelessness, overcrowding and the availability of larger family homes.

Members requested ward-level deprivation data for councillors and noted the ongoing work to address poor housing standards through landlord licensing and enforcement activity. Concerns were raised regarding homelessness, temporary accommodation and evictions from the private rented sector, with officers advising that the impact of recent legislative changes would continue to be monitored.

The Board discussed the links between poor housing, including damp and mould, and health outcomes. Health partners highlighted the role of home visits and assessments in identifying housing-related health issues.

Members supported a partnership approach to improving housing and health outcomes and expressed support for establishing a task and finish group to

consider housing need, affordability, overcrowding and housing quality across the borough.

Members asked for the following actions to be taken away:

- Officers to explore provision of ward-level deprivation data in a future report;
- Officers to provide available data on overcrowding and housing need;
- A joint approach between the Health and Wellbeing Board and Strategic Housing Partnership should be considered to oversee the Public Health Annual Report Action Plan.

Resolved – That

1. **The Public Health Annual Report 2025/2026: 'A Place to Call Home: How Housing Shapes Health in Wirral' be endorsed.**
2. **The Board be provided regular progress updates on housing-related health outcomes, as part of the system-wide strategic commitment to improve residents' health through better housing.**

18 **UPDATE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH MODEL**

The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer (Wirral Community Health & Care NHS FT presented the report of the Wirral Provider Alliance which provided an update on relevant information, plans, and work underway with relation to the development of the national NHS Neighbourhood Health model in Wirral.

It supported the aims of the draft Wirral Plan (2027-2031), particularly for residents to experience better well-being, health and safety with less risk of crisis, and to see local services joining up across the Council, NHS, GPs, Police, DWP, Schools and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations.

It was highlighted that there was an excellent opportunity to align the Neighbourhood Health model with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. There was an overlap of particular pathways such as between Primary Care and Neighbourhood into housing improvement initiatives. There were national and regional expectations of the Neighbourhood plan which would be completed whilst anchoring the plan within the particular needs of Wirral's communities and their priorities.

It was proposed to put the system priorities into a single high-level dashboard of main data metrics. The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer would continue to stay in touch with Cheshire and Mersey BI colleagues about the development of those, whilst also identifying Wirral's local priorities. One of the key questions during the developmental sessions would be about how the metrics would be used, which forums would they travel to and how would they be used within those.

Work was continuing to identify interdependence between initiatives such as between Neighbourhoods and Pride of Place. The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer stated that a separate piece of work was being undertaken with CWP and the Council's Human Resources team to look at what services were provided and what footprints they currently worked on and how they might be aligned to each other. The development of integrated neighbourhood teams was a really important part of the neighbourhood health model. It was important to establish how to enable people from the NHS, the Council and voluntary sector groups to work together effectively on behalf of local residents, particularly those with more complex needs. An important question for the Neighbourhood teams would be how to enable the most effective coordination when there were teams that could not be aligned to individual neighbourhoods. Equally important would be how to enable effective access into services not just through neighbourhood health centres but also GP surgeries and Community Hubs. The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer stated that from an access to services perspective, it should not really matter which neighbourhood residents lived in.

A number of contracting models remained under development nationally and formed important components of the emerging integrated service model. It was noted that consultation on these proposals was ongoing and, whilst the broad direction of travel was understood, the detailed implications would be assessed and responded to as further information became available.

Members noted that the development of neighbourhood plans remained part of a wider national programme, with similar work taking place across the country through communities of practice. Good progress had been made in establishing the foundations required to support the delivery of the neighbourhood model.

Members queried when the Board would have sight of the key metrics. The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer would bring a report to the December Board that was outcome metrics focused.

No strategic risks were identified in the report and given the scale of change, this was queried by Members. In response, the Deputy Chief Strategy Officer stated that a Programme Board for Neighbourhoods was being set up that would have a risk register which would contain the strategic risks and that would come to this Board. The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer was in conversation with colleagues in Cheshire and Merseyside ICB regarding what the risks were that were recognised collectively in the Cheshire and Merseyside system and also with regard to equality impact assessment. A Cheshire and Merseyside workshop was due to take place on 23 September 2026 and one in mid-October 2026 which would set out the governance within which the Wirral Neighbourhood programme would operate.

The Chief Executive of Healthwatch Wirral highlighted that consideration should be given to communicating with residents right the way through the process. Members discussed the importance of communicating clearly with residents regarding any changes to service delivery and expectations of access. The Deputy Chief Strategy Officer reported that Wirral Provider Alliance had a project relating to access to general practice which was led by Dr David Jones and sought to ensure consistency with national standards for access to general practice. It was noted that significant changes had taken place in this area and that consideration was being given to how best to ensure residents understood the services available through their practice and the access standards they could expect. Members were advised that discussions at the Provider Alliance had also considered variations in access linked to factors such as levels of deprivation.

In response to a question regarding neighbourhood-based differences, the Deputy Chief Strategy Officer stated that residents should not experience significantly different levels of service or access routes depending on where they lived, and that consistency of access across neighbourhoods remained an important consideration.

Resolved – That the update on the development of the national NHS Neighbourhood Health model in Wirral be noted.

19 **SEND IMPROVEMENT UPDATE**

The Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion presented the report of the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the improvement programme for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for the Local Area in Wirral. The report covered the May and June Partnership Board meetings including the extraordinary meeting held on the 16 June 2026. Over the period, in addition to the regular reporting on the local area's progress against its Priority Action Plan, the Local Area SEND Partnership Board received and approved the SEND Reform plans as required by of the Department of Education. The June 2026 board meeting focussed on the impact of the changes to the neurodevelopmental pathway that had been put in place since the start of 2025. It was reported that the March 2025 six-monthly SEND stocktake undertaken by the Department for Education and NHS England had been positive, with progress recognised across all priority areas.

Improvements were noted in system-wide partnership working, the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care Plans, support for transition and preparation for adulthood, and the continued development of the neurodevelopmental (ND) pathway, with Wirral remaining at the forefront of innovation across the Cheshire and Merseyside region. Members were advised that the SEND Reform Plans, considered by the Local Area SEND Partnership Board in June, built on the existing 2025-2029 SEND Strategy.

The plans set out a vision, three-year strategy, implementation roadmap and performance measures to align local delivery with national SEND reforms. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening inclusive education in mainstream settings, developing local specialist provision, improving co-production with families, and progressing the proposed “Experts at Hand” model to support schools and neighbourhood-based services.

The approval of the SEND Reform Plans would support the long-term sustainability of the High Needs Block through Department for Education financial arrangements, including a £2.4 million transformation grant for 2025/26 and the potential write-down of accumulated overspends. It was noted that SEND reform was a long-term programme extending beyond 2030, with significant changes expected over the next three years as mainstream inclusion was strengthened. The findings of an impact session on the ND pathway highlighted positive partnership work to improve earlier identification of need, increase support for children and families before diagnosis, and develop resources such as the Neurodevelopmental Profiling Tool and online ND Hub. While challenges remained around diagnostic waiting times and demand, the foundations established over the previous 15 months were reported to be strong, with Wirral continuing to lead practice and share learning across the wider region.

Members queried progress on Educational Psychologist recruitment and capacity. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion reported that the procurement process for additional Educational Psychology capacity to support statutory Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments had been completed and a successful bidder identified. He advised that recruitment remained challenging, although the Council’s trainee development approach was proving successful, with future vacancies already being filled through the training pathway. Further recruitment to main grade Educational Psychologist posts and a permanent Principal Educational Psychologist post was due to commence.

In response to concerns regarding lengthy neurodevelopmental diagnostic waiting times, the Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion outlined the actions being taken to increase assessment capacity and emphasised the importance of support for children and families while awaiting diagnosis. He also advised that a bid for additional funding to reduce waiting lists was awaiting an outcome.

Members also raised questions regarding increasing demand for specialist school places and the development of SEND provision within mainstream schools. The Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion advised that a sufficiency strategy was being developed to expand specialist and resource-based provision, with a focus on increasing specialist capacity within mainstream settings and building confidence among families over the next three years.

The Director of Strategy and Partnerships at CWP provided assurance that NHS partners, including children's mental health and neurodevelopmental services, were working collaboratively across Cheshire and Merseyside and with local authorities to address demand and improve outcomes for children and young people, with joint proposals being developed for consideration by the Integrated Care Board.

Resolved – That the progress of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board in progressing system improvement as required by the Improvement Notice be noted.

20 **HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

The Head of Legal Services (Interim Monitoring Officer) introduced a report which sought to formalise any co-options to the Board. In addition, the report requested her to carry out a formal review of the membership of the Board and bring back a further report. The review would involve the renewal of the membership list including updated titles of organisations and individuals which had changed and the removal of organisations which no longer existed.

Historically, the Board had invited individuals from various organisations to participate in meetings and had also co-opted individuals to the Board to support effective decision making. It had recently been identified that it would be beneficial for the board to have a representative of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector as a member of the board on a regular basis.

The Council would be changing its form of governance in May 2027 and therefore a full review of the Council membership of the Board would need to be undertaken for inclusion in the Council's new constitution. In addition, there had been changes in the structure to the Integrated Care Board and to some of the other health trusts and a review of membership from those organisations was also required. Pending the full review, the Head of Legal Services stated that, the Board could consider co-opting a representative from the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector as a Board member to enable them to take part in meetings over the next few months. She explained that a co-opted member could attend the Board on a regular basis although they would not have any voting rights. It was a matter for the Board to decide whether it was appropriate to co-opt somebody at this stage or to await the outcome of the full review.

Members observed that Primary Care was not mentioned in the core membership and there was no longer a Place Director for Cheshire and Merseyside ICB. In addition, the Chair noted that there should be a housing representative as a core member of the Board.

In response, the Head of Legal Services acknowledged that the issues raised demonstrated the need for a full review of the Terms of Reference. The Chief Executive of the ICB, advised that the NHS structure had changed and that Place director roles no longer existed, with executive representation now provided through the Integrated Care Board.

Resolved – That the Head of Legal Services be requested to undertake a review of the Health and Wellbeing Board membership and bring back a further report to the Board, with a renewed membership, including updated titles of organisations and individuals that have changed and the removal of organisations that no longer exist.

21 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services presented a report which gave the proposed work programme for the following Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the Health and Wellbeing Board work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year be endorsed subject to the addition of the following items

- **A Housing workshop;**
- **An Adult Social Care Demand report;**
- **A Mental Health report; and**
- **A six-month Housing Progress report**

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	S Bennett (Chair)	
	Councillors	C Carubia	T Murphy
		V Wilson	C Baldwin
		J Grier	A Onwuemene
		EA Grey	G Davies
		G McManus (for T Laing)	

23 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the webcast and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

24 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Tom Laing. Councillor Grahame McManus substituted.

25 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Amanda Onwuemene declared a personal interest as a close family member was a foster carer.

Councillor Tony Murphy declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding any mention of Juno CIC as he had a family member that worked for Juno.

26 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July be approved and adopted as a correct record.

27 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no public or Members questions.

28 **YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN**

The Youth Offending Service Manager introduced a report on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Education which sought endorsement of the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2026 2027. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) was a non-departmental public body for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. The preparation and submission of an 'Annual Plan' was linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award; the award contributed to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

The Wirral Youth Justice Service was a statutory partnership between Police, Probation, the Council and Health partners in accordance with the Crime & Disorder Act 1998/

The report noted that the Youth Justice Service was overseen by the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board. The management board should be formed to provide strategic direction with the aim of preventing offending by children and young people.

As a statutory partner under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Wirral Borough Council had a key role to play in delivering Youth Justice. Endorsement by The Council would support the delivery of this Strategic Plan and therefore the linked aspects of The Wirral Plans.

The Committee welcomed the highly positive Youth Justice annual report and commended the Youth Offending Service Manager and the wider Youth Justice team for achieving Quadrant 1 status. In response to questions, the Youth Offending Service Manager outlined the workforce development programme, which identifies training needs across Merseyside, develops specialist roles and supports staff through peer networks. Members highlighted the success of the Sliding Doors project, peer mentoring arrangements and the reduction in first-time entrants to the youth justice system. The Head of Service - Harm Outside the Home advised that Sliding Doors was now being delivered in schools and used as part of staff training, while the peer mentoring programme had secured funding for a further year and continued to provide development opportunities for young people with lived experience. Responding to further questions, The Youth Offending Service Manager explained that Quadrant 1 status placed Wirral among the top-performing youth justice services nationally and described the No Comment Pathway, which diverted vulnerable young people away from formal criminalisation, noting that 19 young people had completed the pathway with no subsequent reoffending recorded.

The Committee also considered the sustainability of the Turnaround programme and support for victims. The Youth Offending Service Manager

confirmed that Turnaround was funded through the Ministry of Justice and Home Office, with funding secured for a further three years, and emphasised the value of early intervention in preventing escalation and reducing demand on services. The Head of Service - Harm Outside the Home added that, irrespective of future funding arrangements or any change of name, the preventative model would continue to form part of service delivery. In response to questions regarding referrals, The Youth Offending Service Manager advised that children entering the justice system came from a wide range of backgrounds with no significant geographical patterns emerging. He also outlined improvements to victim support services, including revised processes, specialist training and therapeutic interventions tailored to individual needs. The Committee noted forthcoming external recognition for the service, with the Director of Children, Families and Education highlighting nominations for regional and national awards in recognition of the team's innovative and preventative work, and Members expressed their appreciation for the service's achievements and leadership.

Resolved – That

1. **The Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27 be endorsed; and**
2. **The Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2026-27 be recommended to Council for approval.**

29 **CARE PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Kerry Mehta introduced a report on behalf of the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the progress and impact of the Care Programme since its introduction in September 2024 and set out the next phase of development through Care Programme Version 2. It highlighted the significant progress made in supporting more children to remain safely with their families and within family-based care, whilst recognising that increasing complexity of need and continued pressures within the care market were driving higher placement costs despite stable numbers of children in care.

The report explained how Care Programme Version 2 would align with the Families First for Children reforms and Wirral's wider transformation programme, bringing together demand management, family help, child protection reform and placement sufficiency within a coordinated whole-system approach. It also outlined the role of the Cheshire and Merseyside Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) and Foster4 in strengthening regional commissioning, increasing local fostering capacity, improving placement sufficiency and reducing reliance on high-cost external provision. The report sought endorsement of these arrangements as part of Wirral's ambition to deliver a more sustainable, effective and financially resilient care system that supported earlier intervention, prevention and better outcomes for children and families.

The Committee considered the development of regional fostering arrangements and support for kinship carers. In response to questions, The Assistant Director for Children & Families advised that the Foster4 model would provide therapeutic support for mainstream foster carers and that Wirral was actively influencing the development of the regional offer to ensure appropriate support for kinship carers. The Head of Permanence Services outlined the distinction between kinship foster carers and those supporting children through Special Guardianship arrangements, noting that the Council maintained a strong support offer for both groups and was seeking to develop this further in line with emerging national policy. The Director for Children, Families & Education advised that a further report on the Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) would be presented to Members, providing an opportunity to explore these issues in greater detail. Members also welcomed the work of foster carers and highlighted the importance of supporting children to remain within family and community settings wherever possible.

The Committee discussed the sustainability of early intervention and family support services, alongside the financial implications of joining Foster4. The Assistant Director for Children & Families explained that ongoing reform and the Families First Partnership approach were intended to ensure that children and families received support at the earliest opportunity, helping to manage demand on statutory services. The Director for Children, Families & Education emphasised the importance of considering the whole children's services system and advised that a further report on Family First Transformation would be presented to a future meeting. Responding to questions regarding Foster4 costs, The Assistant Director for Children & Families explained that the projected increase reflected the withdrawal of Department for Education subsidy and the transfer of additional responsibilities to the regional arrangement, while also offering opportunities for efficiencies and specialist foster placements. He highlighted the significant costs associated with some residential care placements and noted that investment in regional fostering infrastructure represented good value in supporting sufficiency and reducing reliance on high-cost placements. The Committee noted the benefits of increasing foster care provision and thanked officers for their report and ongoing work

Resolved – That:

1. **The progress and impact of the Care Programme since its introduction in September 2024 be noted,**

2. **Care Programme Version 2 and Foster4 Programmes, and Regional Care Cooperatives be endorsed, and the need to build on the progress achieved to date whilst responding to increasing complexity of need, ongoing placement market pressures and the**

requirements of the Families First for Children reforms be recognised

3. **Regular updates on the delivery and impact of Care Programme Version 2, together with progress on the Cheshire and Merseyside Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) and Foster4 programme be received at future meetings.**

30 **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1**

Alex Jones presented a report on behalf of the Director for Children, Families and Education which provided the latest performance information for the Children's, Families and Education Directorate.

The Performance Report contained a suite of outcome-based performance measures that matched those featured in the Local Governments Outcomes Framework. These measures supported the delivery of the Children's Services Business Plan objectives and were intrinsically aligned to the delivery of the Wirral Plan.

The data contained in the Performance Report (Appendix A) related to Quarter 1, 2026/27. Some data had not yet been published. Where this was the case, an N/A had been entered and an explanation provided.

The Committee considered the performance report and discussed placement stability for children in care. In response to questions, the Head of Service – Safeguarding, advised that placement stability remained a key priority and that officers routinely monitored children who experienced three or more placement moves. She explained that detailed analysis was undertaken to understand the causes of placement instability and to identify interventions that could prevent unplanned placement endings, with services working collaboratively to provide the appropriate support around children and young people.

The Committee also discussed workforce retention, sickness absence and agency staffing levels. The Head of Service – Safeguarding acknowledged that sickness absence rates were above the regional average and advised that a workforce strategy was being implemented to address retention, absence and workforce sustainability, supported by improved exit interview arrangements. The Director of Children, Families & Education reported that further work was underway to understand the causes of sickness absence, particularly stress and workload pressures, and that the wider transformation programme was focused on managing demand, strengthening capacity and reducing reliance on agency staff. The Assistant Director for Children and Families added that some agency staffing reflected the Council's commitment to staff development and career progression, with temporary cover being

required while employees undertook new roles within the service. The Committee noted the actions being taken to support workforce stability and capacity.

Resolved – That

1. The content of the Quarter 1 Performance Report attached in Appendix A to the report be noted.

31 **SEND IMPROVEMENT**

Adrian Leach introduced the report on behalf of the Director of Children's Services, which provided the Children Young People and Education Committee with an update on the improvement programme for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for the Local Area in Wirral. The report covered the September LASPB Meeting, which was an impact focus session focussing on the progress made and future development plans in relation to Preparation for Adulthood. As part of its business as usual the LASPB also received updates on a range of performance measures that have been agreed across the partnership.

The Committee considered the SEND and Inclusion performance report and discussed increasing demand for speech and language support, neurodevelopmental assessments and SEND services. In response to questions, The Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion agreed to provide further analysis of speech and language needs by age group and advised that work was underway across partnership boards to better understand emerging needs and the impact of early screening. He explained that lengthy waits for neurodevelopmental diagnostic assessments were primarily linked to paediatrician capacity within the NHS pathway and outlined plans, supported by transformation funding, to increase capacity through multidisciplinary approaches. He also undertook to explore concerns raised regarding the complexity of financial assessments for carers supporting young people with SEND.

The Committee discussed wider system pressures, including non-attendance of appointments, data quality and rising numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion reported that health partners were improving information systems, appointment processes and data management to reduce inefficiencies and improve service delivery. In response to questions regarding SEND reforms and increasing EHCP demand, he advised that further analysis was planned to understand why demand in Wirral continued to exceed that of statistical neighbours and national averages, noting that a range of factors may be contributing to this trend. The Director for Children, Families & Education invited The Assistant Director for Education to outline work on the graduated approach, and The

Assistant Director for Education reported that schools had been provided with new digital tools to assess inclusivity and support earlier intervention. He also highlighted work with parents and carers, alongside the introduction of a digital neurodiversity profiling tool, to help identify and address needs at the earliest opportunity.

The Committee also considered school readiness and the importance of early intervention. Officers were asked about engagement with early years settings and concerns regarding some children entering school without key developmental skills. The Assistant Director for Education advised that dedicated Early Years SENCO support was available to private, voluntary and independent settings and that an early notification process enabled emerging needs to be identified before school entry. The Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion added that universal screening tools, health visitor assessments and early years support all contributed to identifying needs at an early stage. Responding to concerns about school readiness, The Assistant Director for Education highlighted the role of the Best Start in Life Strategy, health visitor programmes and transition support for families in improving outcomes for children entering education. The Committee noted the update and the ongoing work being undertaken to strengthen early identification, inclusion and support for children and young people with SEND.

Resolved – That the progress of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board in progressing system improvement as required by the Improvement Notice be noted.

32 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services, Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report on behalf of the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee. It was stated that the Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

It was envisaged that the work programme would be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Children, Young People and Education Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee welcomed the reports presented and requested that a future report be brought forward on child poverty, particularly in light of concerns regarding the impact of council tax changes on families, levels of child poverty

and potential implications for children and young people. Members noted that existing partnership work was already taking place in this area and expressed an interest in understanding emerging trends and any actions that could be taken to mitigate financial pressures on families.

The Committee also discussed the future scheduling of reports relating to Juno Homes. In response to questions, the Director for Children, Families & Education advised that further information on the organisation's financial arrangements and ongoing work could be incorporated into a future Care Programme update or provided separately, and undertook to review the previous request for a dedicated report. Members noted that the matter remained on the work programme and agreed that it should be scheduled for consideration at a future meeting, alongside other planned items, to ensure appropriate scrutiny and context.

Resolved – That the Children, Young People and Education Committee notes the proposed Children, Young People and Education Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year.

PENSIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22 September 2026

Present:	Councillor		
	Councillors	Cooper	J Walsh
		B Hall	C Carubia
		JE Green	J Bird
		T Cox	L Luxon-Kewley
		C Povall	T Murphy
	Councillors	J Lonergan, Knowsley Council	
		C Howard, Sefton Council	
		D Kent, St Helens Council	
Apologies	Councillors	B Kenny	
		P Stuart	
		N Graham	
		J Robinson	
		R Bannister, UNISON Retired Member Representative	

16 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Vice-Chair, deputising for the Chair at this meeting, welcomed all present and those watching the webcast.

The Vice-Chair suggested changing the order of the agenda to hear item eleven (Pension Board Review 2025-26 and Work Plan 2026-27) after item seven (Merseyside Pensions Fund Annual Report & Accounts 2025/26 and Letter of Representation). This was agreed by assent.

17 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from:

- Councillor P Stuart who was deputised by Councillor T Murphy
- Councillor J Robinson
- Councillor N Graham who was deputised by Councillor J Bird
- R Bannister, Unison retired member representative
- The Chair, Councillor Kenny, who was deputised by Councillor L Luxon-Kewley.

18 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor B Hall declared a personal interest as she was a retired member of the Merseyside Pension Fund and a Member of the Fund as a Councillor. Her husband was a deferred Member of the Fund. Councillor B Hall also declared that she had a conflict of interest with item six of the agenda (Grant Thornton – The Audit Findings Report for Merseyside Pension Fund), as she was the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Councillor C Povall declared a personal interest as her daughter was a Member of the Fund.

Councillor T Cox declared a personal interest as he was a Member of the Fund as a Councillor.

Councillor T Murphy declared a personal interest as his wife was a Member of the Fund.

Councillor C Carubia declared a personal interest as he was a Member of the Fund.

Councillor L Luxon-Kewley declared a personal interest as she was a Member of the Fund.

Councillor J Bird declared a personal interest as her partner was a Member of the Fund and she was a Member of the Northern Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Pool, through the Greater Manchester Pension Fund.

Councillor D Kent declared a personal interest as he was a Member of the Fund.

Councillor C Howard declared a personal interest as her and her partner was a member of the Merseyside Pension Fund.

Councillor J Lonergan declared a personal interest as her partner was a Member of the Northern Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Pool, through the Greater Manchester Pension Fund.

D Edwards declared a personal interest with item ten of the agenda (Appointment of Independent Person to Merseyside Pension Fund).

19 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2026 be agreed as a correct record.

20 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No Public Questions had been received for the meeting.

Two statements had been received for the meeting.

No Petitions or Questions by Members had been received for the meeting.

20.1 **Statements and petitions**

K Fletcher attended the meeting and presented a statement, in relation to item nine of the agenda (Draft Investment Strategy Statement), speaking in opposition to Merseyside Pension Fund investments in defence companies.

G Dropkin attended the meeting and presented a statement, in relation to item nine of the agenda (Draft Investment Strategy Statement), speaking in opposition to Merseyside Pension Fund investments in defence companies.

21 GRANT THORNTON – THE AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT FOR MERSEYSIDE PENSION FUND

Councillor B Hall left the room for this item.

The Director of Pensions and representatives from Grant Thornton presented the report which highlighted the key findings and other matters arising from Grant Thornton's external audit of the financial statements of Merseyside Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Subject to the satisfactory completion of the outstanding audit work, Grant Thornton's anticipated audit opinion would be unqualified.

Members thanked Grant Thornton and the Finance Team at Merseyside Pension Fund for their work on this report and the audit.

Resolved – That the report provided by External Auditor, Grant Thornton, be noted.

22 MERSEYSIDE PENSION FUND ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2025/26 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION

The Director of Finance presented the report, the purpose of which was to present to Members the Annual Report & Accounts for Merseyside Pension Fund for 2025/26 and a letter of representation prepared by Officers on behalf of the Committee.

The Statement of Accounts summarised the Fund's transactions for the 2025/26 financial year and its financial position at year end. The Fund's financial position for the year ended 31 March 2026 was reported as £12.2bn.

The primary reporting publication for the Fund's Statement of Accounts was part of Wirral Council's Accounts, as the Administering Authority. The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations required the Fund's financial statements to also be published within the Fund's statutory Annual Report.

The accounts were prepared and submitted for external audit in July 2026. The external auditors, Grant Thornton, subject to outstanding work, had indicated there would be an unqualified opinion. The audit work had identified no adjustments to the

financial statements. A small number of changes to the disclosure notes had been made. At the time of writing the report, the Fund had agreed to these amendments and there were no audit recommendations; a verbal update would be provided at the meeting.

The Audit Opinion would be issued following final completion of the audit, consideration of the Audit Findings Report and approval of the amended Statement of Accounts at both the Pensions Committee and the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Subject to this, the accounts would form the basis of the Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2026.

A Letter of Representation on behalf of the Committee had been prepared, which gave assurances to the Auditor on various aspects relating to the Pension Fund.

Members queried the difference between the actual financial performance and the predicted financial performance, noting that the difference was quite significant. The Director of Pensions explained that the Fund's Actuary provides the predications, which are conservative due to the unpredictability of stock markets.

Resolved – That

1. **the audited Statement of Accounts for 2025/26, the amendments to the accounts, the Audit Findings Report and the Letter of Representation, be noted;**

2. **the above reports be referred to the Audit and Risk Management Committee for approval; and**

3. **publication the Annual Report of Merseyside Pension Fund for 2025/26 be approved**

23 **PENSION BOARD REVIEW 2025-26 AND WORK PLAN 2026-27**

The Independent Chair of the Pension Board presented the report which reviewed the work and performance of the Local Pension Board and its members between 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It included a proposed Work Plan for 2026-27.

When approved, the final version of the report should be included within Merseyside Pension Fund's (MPF) Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Members queried the staffing challenges and noted how this impacted the Fund. The Director of Pensions assured Members that the Fund was working on staffing and was assessing the possibility of employing apprentices and new starters. The Director of Pensions acknowledged that this was a wider issue across the LGPS .

Resolved – That the Pension Board Review for 2025-26 and the proposed Work Plan for 2026-27 be noted.

24 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS) PENSIONS DASHBOARDS ECOSYSTEM: POST-CONNECTION WORKSTREAM**

The Head of Pensions Administration presented the report, which provided Pensions Committee with an overview of the workstream being progressed by Fund officers following connection to the Pensions Dashboards ecosystem in September 2025.

The objective of the workstream was to ensure continued compliance with industry guidance, assess operational effectiveness, and improve data completeness in advance of the public launch of the Money Helper Pension Dashboard, expected during 2027/2028.

Members noted that the Pensions Dashboard could have led to increased workload at the Fund and increased data protection issues. Officers assured Members that the Fund were testing the software to ensure the Fund was prepared to take on any additional workload. Officers also told Members that data protection was a fundamental design principle embedded throughout the ecosystem. Member data remains within the Fund's own systems, as the Pensions Dashboard does not hold or store copies of members' personal data.

Resolved – That the report, along with the resource requirements in meeting Pension Dashboard deliverables and standards in accordance with the legislative framework and industry statements of recommended practice, be noted.

25 **DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT**

The Director of Pensions presented the report which provided Pensions Committee with a draft of Merseyside Pension Fund's Investment Strategy Statement (ISS). The recently issued Local Government Pension Scheme (Pooling, Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2026 along with the statutory guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, set new requirements for the formulation of an ISS.

Members questioned the way in which the Fund oversaw the identification and avoidance of proscribed arms companies and the management of investments moving forward, as well as how the Fund would take into account Scheme Members' views.

Officers informed Members that the Fund's internal Investment Managers took great care in the selection of the Fund's investments with a view to avoiding investing in proscribed companies and that they had been reminded of the restrictions. The pool company was implementing an Order Management System which would automate much of the manual intervention that was presently required. . The Director of Pensions explained to Members that he had spoken to Islington Pension Fund and Clwyd Pension Fund regarding their approach to consulting Scheme Members. The Director of Pensions informed Members that the Scheme Advisory Board was due to publish guidance on undertaking Member Surveys which should aid the considerations around consulting Scheme Members.

Resolved – That

1. **the draft Investment Strategy Statement, including the proposed strategic asset allocation and local investment parameters, be approved; and**

2. **Authority be delegated to the Director of Pensions to refine the final version following due consideration of the consultation with employers.**

26 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON TO MERSEYSIDE PENSION FUND

D Edwards left the room for this item.

The Director of Pensions stated that Regulation 53A of the LGPS Regulations 2013 required every administering authority to appoint an independent person to support the LGPS senior officer and the pensions committee. Regulation 53A also requires the appointment to be in accordance with guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

The independent person should support the LGPS senior officer and pension committees by providing independent and professional expertise including to support committees to scrutinise and challenge the advice they receive. The role was similar to that of a Non-Executive Director or Professional Trustee. Their responsibilities covered all functions of the pension committee or its equivalent, including decisions on investment strategy, governance, administration and the role of the administering authority as a shareholder or client of its asset pool company.

Members queried the possibility of a conflict of interest arising from appointing D Edwards to the two roles. Legal Officers assured the Committee that Officers had explored this avenue and highlighted that the statutory guidance issued by MHCLG permitted that the same individual could be appointed to both roles.

Members endorsed the appointment of D Edwards.

Resolved – That

1. **the appointment of the independent chair of the local pension board, Mr Dafydd Edwards, as the Fund's independent person, be approved subject to satisfactory contractual arrangements being agreed; and**

2. **Authority be delegated to the Director of Pensions to agree contractual arrangements in consultation with the Director of Finance.**

27 WIRRAL LOCAL PENSION BOARD MINUTES

The Director of Pensions introduced the report, which provided Pensions Committee with the draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Wirral Local Pension Board.

Resolved – That the minutes of the Wirral Local Pension Board be noted.

28 MINUTES OF WORKING PARTY MEETINGS

The Director of Pensions introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide Members with the minutes of meetings of Working Parties held since the previous Committee meeting.

Resolved – That the minutes of the Working Party meetings held since the last Committee meeting be approved.

29 **APPOINTMENT OF PROPERTY MANAGER**

The Director of Pensions introduced the report, which sought approval for the appointment of a property manager to provide property management services to Merseyside Pension Fund.

Appendix 1 to the report contained exempt information. This was by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972 i.e. information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

In response to questions from Members, the Director of Pensions explained that properties in the UK which were held as Fund assets would move over to the Pooling company once it was FCA authorised.

Resolved - That the appointment of CBRE Ltd for the provision of investment property management services, be approved, pursuant to a contract for a terms of 2 years, with 2 options to extend for in each case for a further year, as the highest scoring tenderer after a mini procurement exercise conducted pursuant to the Northern LGPS Framework Lot 3 – UK Property Management Mandate in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tenderer criteria with a minimum contract value of £2,048,680 based on a 4-year term.

30 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

31 **UPDATE ON THE NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS) REGULATIONS & GUIDANCE AND PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING NORTHERN LGPS**

Resolved – That the exempt report be noted.

32 **EXEMPT APPENDIX - APPOINTMENT OF PROPERTY MANAGER**

Resolved – That the exempt appendix be noted.

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TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23 September 2026

Present: Councillor KJ Williams (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Redfern, J Grier, G Wood, K Murphy (in place of R Molyneux), I Lewis (in place of H Cameron), G McManus, K Murphy, L Luxon Kewley (in place of A Ainsworth)

20 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Vice-Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

21 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from
Councillor Jenny Johnson (Chair)
Councillor Ruth Molyneux. Councillor Kieran Murphy deputised.
Councillor Kathy Hodson.
Councillor Ann Ainsworth. Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewley deputised.
Councillor Helen Cameron. Councillor Ian Lewis deputised.
Councillor Kaitlin Stuart.

22 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No interests were declared.

23 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2026 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

24 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were two public questions and one statement submitted to this meeting. No petitions or member questions had been received.

25 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr Warwick asked what could be done to help Wirral Council develop a valuable visitor economy, particularly in East Wirral with its social economic issues. The Chair responded that Wirral Council was working closely with the Combined Authority and Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership to strengthen the visitor economy. Positive growth was highlighted in the borough's tourism sector and noted that the Council's new Economic Growth Strategy would include a continued focus on the visitor economy, economic growth and opportunities across the borough.

Mr Warwick asked a supplementary question regarding the use of the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) methodology for measuring tourism figures. The Chair advised that a written response would be provided.

The Principal Lawyer read out a question on behalf of Zoe Campbell asking what steps Wirral Council was taking to introduce a free summer holiday swimming programme to support low-income families and improve water safety. The Chair responded that Wirral Council had already provided free summer swimming for children and young people throughout August 2026 at all pool-based leisure facilities, aimed at improving access to leisure opportunities, supporting wellbeing and increasing water confidence and safety.

25.1 Statements and Petitions

Councillor Simon Mountney made a statement in relation to Item 6, Wirral Archaeology and the Search for Brunanburh. He highlighted the historical significance of the Battle of Brunanburh and the compelling case for Bromborough as its possible location. He emphasised the importance of supporting archaeological research and recording Wirral’s heritage, particularly in light of the proposed Peak Cluster development. Councillor Mountney also highlighted the potential benefits for the borough’s heritage offer and visitor economy.

26 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

There were no questions by Members.

27 WIRRAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE SEARCH FOR BRUNANBURH

Wirral Archaeology CIC presented the report and provided an update on ongoing research into the possible location of the Battle of Brunanburh. They outlined the archaeological, historical, topographical and place-name evidence that had informed their work and highlighted a significant number of artefacts recovered from sites across central Wirral. Members were advised that the findings indicate the presence of a rare multi-period archaeological landscape, with evidence spanning from the Mesolithic period, Bronze Age and Iron Age.
They also highlighted the wider cultural and educational value of the work, the potential significance for Wirral's heritage offer and visitor economy, and the importance of protecting and preserving archaeological sites.

Members raised the following questions/ comments:

- Members queried what evidence would be required for the Battlefields Trust to formally recognise a Brunanburh battlefield site.
- Members enquired how any future findings would be verified, published and incorporated into heritage and tourism strategies.
- Members sought information on the support and resources that could be provided to assist ongoing research.
- Members asked about changes to the group's research methodology and the significance of the discoveries made to date.
- Members queried whether recovered artefacts could be displayed within Wirral museums.
- Members asked how Wirral Archaeology CIC was engaging with schools, community groups and the wider public to promote local history and archaeology.

Representatives of Wirral Archaeology CIC outlined the challenges of identifying ancient battlefields and advised that further scientific testing and professional evaluation of artefacts was ongoing. They highlighted the significance of the multi-period archaeological evidence discovered, the importance of protecting archaeological sites, and the educational and community engagement work being undertaken across the borough. Officers also agreed to explore opportunities for displaying artefacts within Wirral's museum and heritage venues.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the contents of the report and the attached appendix.

28 MEMBER CHAMPION FOR HERITAGE - UPDATE REPORT

The Member Champion for Heritage provided an update on heritage-related activity across the borough. The Member Champion highlighted the following to Members:

- Progress on the development of a tourism and heritage trail
- Engagement with New York's Central Park Conservancy and discussions around World Heritage Site applications.
- Positive developments within the Birkenhead Town of Culture bid and the importance of continued investment in key heritage and cultural attractions.
- The significant contribution of heritage and community volunteer groups, including the successful centenary celebrations of the Vale Park Bandstand and their role in supporting local heritage initiatives.
- The success of the 2026 Wirral Heritage Open Days programme and opportunities to further promote Wirral's heritage offer.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the contents of the report and attached appendix.

29 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Vice-Chair introduced the work programme, no further items were proposed for inclusion in the work programme.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes and comments on the proposed Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee work programme.

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 September 2026

Present:	Councillor	T Cox (Chair)	
	Councillors	P Gilchrist T Laing T Murphy (deputising for E Grey)	A Onwuemene A Davies (deputusing for J Williamson)
Apologies	Councillors	J Williamson	EA Grey

15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors J Williamson and E Grey. They were deputised by Councillors A Davies and T Murphy respectively.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

18 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2026 be approved as a correct record.

19 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no public questions, statements or petitions, and no Member questions submitted to this meeting.

20 MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced a report, which provided for consideration of revisions to the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations within the Constitution. These revisions were further to the statutory

recommendations contained in the External Auditor's Annual Report, presented to Full Council on 2nd March 2026.

The Interim Monitoring Officer explained to Members the steps officers had taken since the statutory recommendations, particularly number four, had been presented and agreed at Full Council. Officers had engaged with Group Leaders, the Senior Leadership team, and the wider member and officer groups via surveys. Responses had been positive but some issues had been highlighted for improvement, particularly within the Protocol. Alongside this piece of work, further work was being undertaken on member and officer learning and development.

Members discussed the amount of survey responses from members, and it was agreed that the spokespersons on this committee would take back the reminder for members to engage with survey work to their respective groups. Members discussed the distinction between the roles of officers and members, and noted the key principles of mutual respect and civility underpinning the Protocol.

Members discussed the wording at paragraph 8.1 of the Protocol, and it was agreed that the wording be amended to ensure that ward councillors were involved in advance of matters affecting their wards.

Paragraph 8.1 would therefore read:

"Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue, all the Members representing the Ward or Wards affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend the meeting. Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise on a local issue, the Ward Members should be notified **at the preparatory stage** ~~the outset~~ of the exercise."

Therefore on a motion proposed by Councillor Cox, and seconded by Councillor Davies, it was -

Resolved – That the Constitution and Standards Committee approves the revisions as set out within Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the amendment to paragraph 8.1 as agreed by the Committee, and refers the matter to Full Council for agreement at the next meeting.

21 **REVISIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Interim Monitoring Officer presented a report, which provided a summary of the discussions held by the Governance Working Group in respect to the proposed changes to the Constitution. The proposed changes were in relation to:

- Part 3 (B) – Committee Terms of Reference
- Part 3 (C) – Overview and Scheme of Delegations of Authority to Officers
- Part 4 (1) – Council Procedure Rules
- Part 4 (5) – Financial Regulations

The report also provided a summary of the proposed Planning Scheme of Management, as well as the Scheme of Delegation to Pensions Officers.

These amendments were necessitated by changes to legislation under the Pensions Act 2026 and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. The Pensions Committee and the Local Pensions Board had endorsed the changes that had been referred. Regarding the Planning changes, these regulations were to come into effect on the 31 October 2026 and would introduce a new National Scheme of Delegation, which would impact on the types of applications determined either by officers or by the Planning Committee. Due to these changes, several sections of the Constitution had been proposed to be amended.

Members raised concerns over the proposed Planning Regulations. It was noted that these changes were due to changes in legislation and there was a need for publicity to ensure that both councillors and the public were aware of the impact of the changes.

Resolved – That the Constitution and Standards Committee approves that the proposed amendments to the Constitution, as detailed in sections 3.2 – 3.16 of this report, be referred to the Full Council for consideration and approval at the meeting of 12 October 2026.

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Council – 12th October 2026

Motions on Notice

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 13.1 and are listed in accordance with Standing Order 13.2.

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1. PROTECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH STRONGER CONTROLS ON HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Proposed by Councillor Andrew Gardner
Seconded by Councillor Simon Mountney

Council notes:

1. The significant growth in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) across parts of Wirral in recent years and the increasing concerns raised by residents regarding the cumulative impact of concentrated HMO development on neighbourhood character, parking provision, waste management and community cohesion
2. That every family home converted into an HMO is one fewer home available for families seeking to put down roots in our communities.
3. That local people increasingly expect councils to have effective powers to help shape development in their neighbourhoods and to ensure that changes which affect local communities are subject to proper scrutiny.
4. That the current planning system allows many smaller HMOs to be created without the need for planning permission, limiting the ability of local authorities and residents to influence decisions that can have a significant cumulative impact on an area.
5. That HMOs are ideally suited to providing undocumented accommodation to those who have no legal status to live in the UK and therefore aid those hoping to evade removal.

Council believes:

1. That housing policy should support balanced, sustainable communities rather than allowing the over-concentration of any single form of housing tenure.
2. That local authorities should have the ability to intervene where the scale and distribution of HMOs risks undermining community cohesion and the availability of family housing.
3. That planning decisions should be made in the interests of local communities and not simply left to the operation of permitted development rights.
4. That our residents deserve a meaningful voice in decisions that shape the future of their neighbourhoods.
5. That many of those being housed in HMOs are some of the most vulnerable in Wirral and are often under the radar of statutory services.

Council resolves:

1. To support the principle that changes from family housing to Houses in Multiple Occupation should be subject to appropriate local planning control.
2. To request all Group Leaders, write to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (with a copy to Wirral's MPs) calling on the Government to strengthen the powers available to local authorities to manage the concentration of HMOs and protect balanced communities.
3. To request that the Assistant Director Chief Planner:
    a. examines the case for introducing an Article 4 Direction covering all of the borough, removing permitted development rights for changes of use from Class C3 dwellinghouses to Class C4 HMOs.
    b. brings forward a report containing recommendations in consultation with the Director of Housing and Communities to the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee that will enable the Council to strike the right balance between providing affordable housing options and protecting the long-term sustainability, character and cohesion of local communities.

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2. TACKLING HOMELESSNESS AND BUILDING SECURE HOMES

Proposed by Councillor Mark Skillicorn
Seconded by Councillor Julie McManus

Council believes that access to a safe, secure, and affordable home is fundamental to the wellbeing, dignity and life chances of residents across Wirral and beyond.

Council welcomes the Prime Minister's renewed national focus on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. This is with a commitment to ensuring that those experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping are provided with a route into secure and settled accommodation. Council further believes that such action must be sustained and systemic in nature, rather than limited to short-term responses to seasonal pressures.

Council recognises that homelessness cannot be addressed solely through the provision of emergency accommodation. Effective and lasting responses require prevention, early intervention and coordinated multi-agency working, including access to health care, mental health services, substance misuse support, employment assistance and wider services for residents with complex or overlapping needs.

Council further welcomes the Government's Affordable and Social Homes Programme and its renewed emphasis on council, social and genuinely affordable housebuilding. Council also recognises the significant and often lasting impact of housing insecurity and homelessness on individuals, children and families.

Council also notes the substantial work being undertaken and developed within Wirral to prevent and address homelessness, rough sleeping and wider housing insecurities.

This includes the importance of Wirral's strategic approach to homelessness and housing, including a continued focus on prevention, early help, rapid rehousing, tenancy sustainment and coordinated support for those sleeping rough or at heightened risk of homelessness. Council further recognises the need for targeted interventions for groups who may be disproportionately at risk, including care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse, people leaving institutional settings and those facing multiple disadvantage.

Council therefore:

- Supports the Government's ambition to end rough sleeping for good.
- Welcomes increased national investment in council housing, social housing and genuinely affordable homes.
- Reaffirms Wirral Council's commitment to preventing homelessness wherever possible, including through early intervention and targeted support for those most at risk.
- Endorses the work already underway across Wirral to reduce rough sleeping, strengthen homelessness prevention and improve access to settled, suitable and sustainable accommodation.
- Supports enhanced partnership working between housing, health, social care, criminal justice agencies, the voluntary, community and faith sector, and other relevant public services, to deliver more effective and joined-up responses to homelessness.
- Welcomes efforts to increase the supply of affordable, social, supported and temporary accommodation within the Borough, recognising that effective prevention must be accompanied by sufficient access to appropriate housing options.
- Calls upon the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to continue collaborating with local authorities and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to ensure that councils are provided with the funding, flexibility and policy tools required to deliver sustainable housing solutions.

Council believes that homelessness is not inevitable. Through sustained investment, effective partnership working and a clear commitment to prevention, Council believes it is possible to work towards a future in which homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring, and in which every resident has the security and dignity of a place to call home.

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3. PROTECTING WIRRAL RESIDENTS FROM HEATWAVES AND FLOODING

Proposed by Councillor Gail Jenkinson
Seconded by Councillor Ewan Tomeny

Council notes:

- That UK summers are getting hotter. The Summer of 2026 was the hottest on record for the UK, breaking the record set only the year before, with the top five warmest summers all occurring since 2003.[1]
- UK winters are getting wetter. According to the Met Office, our winters are expected to feature more days with significant rainfall, particularly in western regions.[2]
- That Wirral, as a peninsula with an extensive coastline, is particularly exposed to flooding and sea-level rise.
- The UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC), the independent statutory body set up to advise the government, including reporting on adapting and preparing for climate change stated in its '*Progress in Adapting to Climate Change'* 2025 report to Parliament that: *"the UK's preparations for climate change are inadequate"*; that: "*The costs of these impacts are already being felt*"; that: *"Adaptation is needed now to ensure that the UK is prepared for today's extreme weather as well as the rapidly increasing severity of future risks"* and that: "*Local authorities play a key role in community preparedness for climate impacts*".[3]
- That heat kills, but that preparation can reduce the number of deaths. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) estimates 1,504 heat-associated deaths in England in summer 2025.[4] Without further adaptation, the CCC warns that heat-related deaths could exceed 10,000 in an average year by 2050.[3]
- The Trade Union Congress (TUC) heat campaign that calls for the urgent modernisation of Health and Safety standards, including a legal maximum working temperature of 30°C (27°C for strenuous work), above which non-essential work is paused or adapted.
- That Wirral Council unanimously declared an Environment and Climate Emergency in July 2019 and, with partners, endorsed the Cool Wirral 3 Climate Action Strategy in 2025.[5] But as the risks have grown, the Council's own climate budget has shrunk. The officer report to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 8 July 2026 confirms that the designated Climate Emergency budget has been reduced by £76,000 for the 2025–26 financial year, with a further £50,000 cut in 2026–27.[6]

Council believes:

1. Efforts should be continued to reduce the impact on the environment and implement adaptation measures to protect Wirral residents from the extreme effects of climate change.
2. That the increasing threat to health, livelihoods and cost of living from extreme weather requires a planned national and local response, including:
    - Investing in and enforcing natural flood and fire risk land management.

    - Making Council owned buildings, infrastructure and transport resilient to flooding and prolonged heat through planning and building control, where possible favouring natural cooling and shading over energy-intensive air-conditioning.
3. The damaging effects of climate change fall hardest on those least able to adapt, leaving them most exposed to the impacts of excessive flooding and extreme heat. The Council's adaptation approach must therefore be designed to reduce these inequalities rather than widen them.
4. That well-designed adaptation brings significant co-benefits including reducing the cost of living, increased health and wellbeing, and better environments for those who live, work and visit.
5. That no one should be required to work in dangerous heat and that the TUC's call for worker protection, including a legal maximum working temperature,[7] is necessary and timely.
6. That the move to a leader-led cabinet model must not risk diluting the council's focus on adaptation and resilience, requiring clear political ownership and robust scrutiny.

Council therefore resolves to ask:

1. The future Leader, when forming the Cabinet, to identify a named Cabinet Member with explicit responsibility for providing leadership in this area, and to ensure that the new overview and scrutiny arrangements give a named committee responsibility for scrutinising it.
2. The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Governance Working Group, to ensure that the 'Environment and Climate Implications' section of every Cabinet and committee report covers adaptation and resilience as well as emissions, so that climate risk is considered across all portfolios;
3. The leader of the Council to write to Wirral MPs and to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs sharing this motion and calling on the Government to:
    - fund locally delivered adaptation and resilience as part of a strengthened national plan, including a fully funded heat-resilience programme for schools, hospitals, care settings and social housing;
    - recognise the role of both strategic and local authorities in place-based adaptation and resilience;
    - underpin action on both climate change mitigation and adaptation with an appropriately resourced statutory duty as supported by the Local Government Association; and
    - publicly support the TUC campaign,[7] for maximum working temperatures so that workers are kept cooler and safer;
4. The Director of Operations to produce a briefing note to all Members, within three months, evaluating the impact of summer 2026 on Council services, staff, and residents, and set out how heat-health advice (in line with UKHSA's

Adverse Weather and Health Plan) and the Cool Wirral 3 adaptation actions will be promoted before and during extreme heat and other severe weather.

5. The Director for Operations working in consultation with the Director for Public Health to provide a report to the Health and Wellbeing Board setting out how climate adaptation measures are being integrated with work on fuel poverty, and on the energy efficiency and resilience of homes across the Borough, including options and costs for a network of cool spaces.
6. The Director of Finance to ask Directors to consider ensuring the inclusion on directorate risk registers of climate adaptation and resilience risks, with owned measurable outcomes; and the Head of Risk and Compliance to consider climate risk management when preparing the internal audit plan.
7. The Assistant Director: chief Planner to ensure that the new Local Plan is informed by current evidence and future climate risks. The Local Plan should address the Wirral context with respect to overheating, flood risk, water scarcity and drought, green and blue infrastructure, sustainable drainage and urban tree canopy, not merely meet the minimum standards set by the National Planning Policy Framework

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[2] https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2026/an-early-look-at-winter-2026-just-how-wet-has-it-been
[3] Climate Change Committee (2025) *Progress in adapting to climate change: 2025 report to Parliament*. London: Climate Change Committee. Available at: https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-adapting-to-climate-change-2025/
[4]UKHSA (2026) Heat mortality monitoring report, England: 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/heat-mortality-monitoring-report-england-2025/heat-mortality-monitoring-report-england-2025
[5] Cool 3 Strategy: www.wirralhealthwellbeingknowledgehub.co.uk/media/xuhb11sj/cool-wirral-3-climate-action-strategy_web-copy-ac.pdf
[6] ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE DATE 8th July 2026 https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=911&MId=12751&Ver=4
[7] https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/employers-must-keep-workers-safe-first-heatwave-2026

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4. DRIVING MORE INVESTMENT INTO BETTER ROAD SAFETY FOR WIRRAL RESIDENTS.

Proposed by Councillor Allan Brame
Seconded by Councillor Helen Raymond

Council notes:

- that speeding fines across England generate around £100 million per year, all of which is paid directly to HM Treasury, with no share returned to local authorities.

- that speeding remains a significant issue across Wirral and the wider city region, with nearly 75,000 speeding offences resulting in enforcement action by Merseyside Police in the year ending March 2025.[1]

- that Wirral Council is responsible for maintaining highways, improving road safety, delivering traffic calming schemes, and responding to persistent community concerns about speeding and dangerous driving.

- that while Wirral Council funds enforcement infrastructure – such as average speed cameras, ANPR enforcement points, signage, and engineering works – it receives no income from the fines issued as a result of these measures.

- that communities across the borough consistently call for greater investment in traffic calming, crossings, school street safety, and active travel protection.

Council believes:

- that a fairer national funding model is required to ensure that money raised from speeding offences is reinvested into the communities where those offences occur.

- that enabling councils to retain a proportion of speeding fine revenue would create a stable, locally-controlled funding stream for road safety improvements.

- that ring fencing such funding would directly support the Council's objectives to reduce casualties, protect vulnerable road users, and improve public confidence in local road safety.

Council resolves to:

1. ask all Group Leaders write to the Secretary of State for Transport, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting that:

    - local authorities receive 50% of the annual revenue generated from speeding fines issued within their area; and

    - this funding be ring fenced exclusively for road safety improvements, including average speed cameras, engineering measures, enforcement support, school safety schemes, and active travel protection.

2. request Group Leaders write to the Chair of the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Mayor of the Liverpool City Region attaching this motion and asking them to support this call for reform and to lobby Government for a fairer distribution of speeding fine revenue.

3. ask the Director of Operations to investigate the feasibility of procuring mobile pairs of average speed cameras that could be deployed across different

streets in Wirral to encourage behaviour change, improve compliance with speed limits, and increase awareness of the consequences of dangerous driving and provide a briefing note to all members of findings

[1] Wirral driver tops list of worst speeding offenders in Merseyside | Wirral Globe

Full Council – Responsibility for Functions

1. Introduction

Full Council is the primary decision-making body of the Council and, as such, is responsible for the exercise of all of the functions that are held by the local authority.

Whilst decisions in relation to these functions could be made by the Council, and indeed some functions can only be carried out by the Full Council, in order to operate more effectively as an organisation, most of the Council's functions are exercised through delegation to a committee, sub-committee or an officer, or to another local authority.

This part of the Constitution contains the remits of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels and also contains the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

2. Council Functions

The Council reserves to itself the following functions (in accordance with the rules and procedures contained in this Constitution):

(a) All non-delegable functions as defined by the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012 including: -

(i) **The Budget** – The approval or adoption of a plan or strategy for the control of the local authority's borrowing, investments or capital expenditure or for determining the authority's minimum revenue provision, which includes the overarching annual:-

(1) Capital programme

(2) Capital investment strategy

(3) Medium term financial plan

(4) Treasury management strategy,

except for any amendment, modification, variation or revocation which—

(aa) is required for giving effect to requirements of the Secretary of State or a Minister of the Crown in relation to a plan or strategy submitted for approval, or to any part submitted; or

(bb) is authorised by a determination made by the local authority—

- in pursuance of arrangements made for the discharge of functions as set out in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of this Constitution (including virements); and
- at the time when the local authority approves or adopts the plan or strategy, as the case may be.

(ii) **Policy Framework (Required)** – The making or revoking or amending the following policies, plans and strategies required to form a part of the Council's Policy Framework:

(1) Annual Library Plan;

(2) Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy;

(3) Development Plan Documents;

(4) Licensing Authority Policy Statement;

(5) Policies made under the Gambling Act (including any resolution relating to casinos);

(6) Local Transport Plan;

(7) Plans and alterations which together comprise the Development Plan;

(8) Sustainable Community Strategy; and

(9) Youth Justice Plan;

except for any amendment, modification, variation or revocation which—

(aa) is required for giving effect to requirements of the Secretary of State or a Minister of the Crown in relation to a plan or strategy submitted for approval, or to any part submitted; or

(bb) is authorised by a determination made by the local authority—

- in pursuance of arrangements made for the discharge of functions as set out in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of this Constitution; and
- at the time when the local authority approves or adopts the plan or strategy, as the case may be.

(iii) Making of a Members Allowance Scheme and amending the same.

(iv) Determination of Mayor's and \deputy Mayor's allowances.

(v) Making a request for single member electoral wards to the Local Government Boundary Commission.

(vi) Resolution to change a scheme for elections.

(vii) Making an order giving effect to the recommendations made in a Community Governance Review.

(viii) Conferring voting rights on co-opted members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees (if any).

(b) **Policy Framework (Choice)** - The making or revoking or amending the following policies, plans and strategies reserved by Council to form a part of the Council's Policy Framework

(i) The Council Plan.

(c) Setting the Council's Council Tax requirement

(d) Electing the Mayor and Deputy Mayor

(e) Appointing the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council (Chair and Vice-Chair of Policy & Resources Committee)

(f) Agreeing or amending the committee structure, the remit/terms of reference of committees, their size and membership

(g) Confirming the appointment (or dismissal) of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance (Section 151) Officer.

(h) Confirming the appointment of the Independent Persons.

(i) Making, amending, revoking, re-enacting or adopting bylaws and promoting or opposing the making of local legislation including bylaws or personal bills.

(j) Appointment of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

(k) Significant changes to the Council's Constitution, including adopting and amending standing orders, Rules of Procedure, Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, Codes and Protocols that make up the Constitution.

(l) All other matters which by law are reserved to the Council including: -

(i) Ombudsman reports where there has been a finding of maladministration with injustice and the report has been rejected

(ii) Statutory officer reports of the Monitoring Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Head of Paid Service and External Auditor's public interest reports.

(m) Conferring the title of Honorary Freeman and Honorary Alderman.

(n) Approving the Annual Senior Officer Pay Policy Statement.

(o) Changing the name of the Borough.

(p) Appointment of representatives of the local authority not otherwise delegated to a Committee.

(q) Nomination of councillors and other persons to outside bodies

(r) Consideration of reports from committees or any other body constituted by the Council.

(s) To receive the minutes of committees and sub-committees acting under delegated powers for question and comment.

(t) Making recommendations to the Secretary of State on the Borough boundaries, ward boundaries, electoral divisions, ward or polling districts; and

(u) any other function which must by law be reserved to full Council.

Note

For the avoidance of doubt, the Full Council retains ultimate responsibility for the actions and decisions of all its Committees and also retains the ability to exercise all its powers whether or not they have also been delegated to a Committee or Officer. Full Council shall not, however, exercise a power that has been delegated without first ensuring that such a step is in the best interests of the Council and in accordance with the rules set out in the Articles of this Constitution. The Council's ability to exercise its powers will not override or supersede any decision or action already taken and implemented by a Committee or Officer acting under delegated authority.