

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Phil Davies
CABINET PORTFOLIO	Leader of the Council
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to his portfolio.

1. FUTURE COUNCIL

The Council, as is the case with other local authorities, continues to face significant financial challenges. Reductions in grant funding received from central government and increased demand for our services mean that we will be forced to make a minimum of £45 million savings by 2017, in addition to the substantial savings we have already agreed.

The Future Council programme will complete a systematic, fundamental review of every Council service. Work is continuing on this vital project to ensure it helps identify options for achieving these savings in a fair, equitable and achievable manner.

I am committed to ensuring that any savings which are proposed are subject to extensive consultation with all stakeholders, including the Council workforce, partners, people using services and Members. I am further committed that savings should be developed in accordance with the Council's corporate priorities to tackle health inequalities, protect the vulnerable and to drive economic growth in the borough.

Policy and Performance Committees are meeting this month to consider the initial outcome from this project. Committees have been provided principles upon which budget options are being developed, as well as an outline of the emerging budget options themselves, to ensure that Elected Members are fully engaged in the process and able to participate in determining the future shape of Council services. A full programme of consultation is planned for the autumn on a range of savings options in order that we can take informed budget decisions in November 2014.

2. COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Annual General Meetings took place on 13th June 2014. I was confirmed as Chair of the Combined Authority, and discussion at the meeting focused on a number of significant strategic projects that will help to bring widespread economic benefit to the whole Liverpool city region.

Three key transport projects were considered at the meeting, including a draft long-term rail strategy to improve links within the city region over the next 30 years. A set of 12 rail

packages have also been identified by Merseytravel which includes enhancements to the Wrexham-Bidston line and development of the Halton Curve to connect the Liverpool city region with Cheshire and North Wales.

The Combined Authority also discussed approaches for tackling youth unemployment with Members raising concerns about the increasing prevalence of zero-hours contracts. Employees who agree to zero-hours deals are not guaranteed a minimum amount of time at work, meaning their pay can vary greatly from week to week, and they can also be called into work at short-notice. I have requested an investigation into this matter and a report will be brought back in the autumn.

I will ensure that Members of the Council are kept up to date with this work and other matters that form part of the Combined Authority's work programme.

3. NORTHERN AGENDA

Wirral has been leading discussions with a number of partners, including the other Chairs of the Combined Authorities, around developing a case for increased Northern political and economic devolution. There are now five Combined Authorities based around the largest city regions in the North; Liverpool City Region; Sheffield; Greater Manchester; the North East; and West Yorkshire.

Wirral is particularly keen to generate a discussion about the significant contribution that Northern economies can play to generate UK growth. The discussion is focusing on the key issues for joint working, national as well as Northern benefits, and identifying what additional devolved powers and flexibilities may be required to do so. The Municipal Journal are sponsoring a lunch at the LGA conference this month and Wirral will have a strong presence at the event to help showcase the important work that is taking place across the Liverpool City Region to promote economic growth.

The importance of the North was also highlighted in a recent speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne MP where he called for the collection of northern cities to form a Northern Powerhouse in order to provide jobs and economic opportunities.

4. INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF BUSINESS

On Thursday 19 June, in my role as Chair of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, I opened the Department of Business, Innovation and Skill's 4th Annual Manufacturing Summit. This national event was hosted at the Floral Pavilion, as part of the International Festival of Business, and also saw key note speeches from Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg and the Secretary of State, Dr Vince Cable.

Over 250 chief executives from major manufacturing businesses throughout the UK, as well as a number of global organisations, attended the event which was an excellent opportunity to showcase Wirral and take part in a national debate on the future of manufacturing.