

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Leisure, Sport and Culture
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Cllr Chris Meaden
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Clare Fish – Strategic Director – Families & Wellbeing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY –

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

1. LEISURE

1. I am pleased to make Council aware of the progress that has begun on the improvements to the artificial 5-a-side pitches at Guinea Gap with the pitches available for public use September 2014.
2. Also at Guinea Gap work is due to start in September 2014 to convert the Sports Hall in to a 50 station fitness suite.
3. At West Kirby Concourse – (Refurbishment of the Fitness Suite) – work is due to start in September 2014 and it will be available for general public use in January 2015.
4. I am very proud to report that two members of the Wirral Metro Swim Squad have now been chosen to represent Great Britain. Tom Nelson follows Isobel Thwaite who gained national honours in March this year.

2. LIBRARY ONE STOP SHOPS

Wirral Libraries continue against the backdrop of challenging budgets to provide a large range of literary and cultural events for Wirral and this month launch our summer reading challenge which engages with many hundreds of children and helps improve literacy and interest in reading, in June we again supported the Book Trust Charity National Bookstart Week encouraging our youngest readers (up to four years old) to receive a gift of Books funded by the charity to encourage families to read together which continues to be a great success on Wirral

The programme of improvement at our main central libraries and sites that have One Stop Shop facilities merged into them continues. Birkenhead Central library has now reopened with its remodelled counter, new doors and more open facilities. Bebington Central will reopen this week (*14 July current target*) having now brought the One Stop Shop facility from nearby Pennant House and this has allowed us to do some much needed internal improvements to the ground floor as well as reduce the number of building we occupy and give Bebington residents one place to visit the council in their locality.

Finally our final phase of work on Heswall will soon be complete with a remodelled space downstairs and upstairs a much improved layout to increase available community space for library users and local groups.

My thanks to all users at each site during this period and hope that they enjoy the improved facilities also my thanks to staff who ensured pop up facilities have been available at each place during this change.

3. WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY

The Strategic Shadow Board (formerly the Williamson Action Group) is working on a series of proposals for the future management of the Gallery. It will have this work completed by the end of July 2014 for further discussions with the Council.

The Williamson will be hosting over the summer, a major exhibition of Richard Hamilton prints, who was one of the most significant post war British artists who died last year. Previously, this had only been hosted by the Barbican in London.

4. FLORAL PAVILION

The theatre programme continues to perform well and there has also been an increase in weddings and conferences at the venue.

A business review will be finalised over the next two months to identify ways of making the 2015/16 budget reductions previously agreed by the Council. This will also look at new opportunities for the venue as well as putting more business on-line.

5. TRANSPORT MUSEUM

The volunteers are efficiently running the Transport Museum and developing the facilities that it offers. Discussions are continuing about the formal transfer process.

6. HERITAGE STRATEGY

Work is being undertaken over the summer to refresh the Council's Heritage Strategy which is held in high regard by organisations like English Heritage.

7. CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Council is beginning discussions with Arts Council England and local organisations about the development of a Cultural Strategy for Wirral.

8. PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE - FOREST SCHOOLS

The Forest Schools project is progressing and spreading well across the Borough with mid and south Wirral to commence in September. The children attending are showing great improvements in self esteem, socialization and communication skills with added health benefits from extra exercise and improvements to wellbeing. The literacy of one trial group raised three points in ten weeks. 727 children from 14 schools have attended so far with two schools making forest schools a part of their intervention methodology after seeing the positive effects.