

Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee
18th September 2018

REPORT TITLE	UPDATE ON LIVERPOOL CITY REGION DEVELOPMENTS
REPORT OF	ROSE BOYLAN, POLICY & STRATEGY MANAGER

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out a brief overview of latest developments at the Liverpool City Region (LCR), including activity underway to implement the City Region devolution deal.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee is requested to note and comment on latest developments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee have requested regular updates and consideration of City Region developments.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 N/a

3.0 LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

A wide range of activity continues, of which the following is just a small extract.

3.1. SUPPORTING YEAR OF ACTION IN THE ENVIRONMENT 2019 ACROSS LCR

LCR partners recently agreed to support a detailed programme of local activity for the 2019 Year of Action in the Environment. The 2019 Year is part of the Government's action plan, published earlier this year; *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*. It also coincides with the 70th anniversary of National Parks and the centenary of the Forestry Commission.

The national Plan aims to get more people from all backgrounds to become involved in projects to improve the natural world. The promotional aspects are based on the range of environmental challenges addressed in the 25 Year Plan, including poor air quality, pollution from single use plastics, the protection of water supplies and the risk and challenges associated with climate change. It is likely to begin with a launch event then a year of campaign, activities and research, ultimately leading to longer term commitments with buy-in and pledges from key partners.

At a city regional level, Nature Connected, the Local Nature Partnership, which brings together public, private and community sector organisations, is a strong advocate of the campaign and has sought the Combined Authority's engagement in the process.

LCR partners are keen to get involved in the Year as part of local ambitions for a clean, inclusive, sustainable and low carbon city region. The aim is to raise awareness, encourage community participation and get wider partner buy-in. Input and support by the Combined Authority will be principally be in-kind rather direct financial contributions and is likely to begin with a launch event then a year of campaigns, activities and pledges;

The Environment Agency is also a key partner in the promotion of the event and can support with existing tools, expertise and contributions, including the various environmental programmes taking place across the city region.

The proposed campaign aligns well with Wirral's pro-active approach to environmental improvement, and is a positive opportunity to link with Wirral's Borough of Culture year to promote the year of environment.

3.2. LCR DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Ongoing activity is underway across the LCR to produce the Digital Infrastructure Action Plan. The aim of this is to develop world class digital infrastructure to make the City Region the most digitally connected in the UK as part of stimulating and accelerating inclusive economic growth.

The LCR approach reflects national evidence that, just as digital skills are now a form of basic literacy, so too is digital infrastructure a core utility, with the direct causal link between digital infrastructure investment and economic growth and competitiveness.

The UK ranks next to last (27th out of 28) in the EU league table of fibre deployment, with just 2% of premises having a fibre connection compared to 85% in Portugal. In response to this, the UK government has devised the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme as part of its £740million National Productivity Investment Fund, in order to stimulate investment in full fibre networks and improve UK competitiveness.

The LCR work to develop a Digital Infrastructure Action Plan (DIAP) is ongoing, led by the Combined Authority (CA) and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and working collaboratively through a Core Group involving officers from each of the six city region districts, Merseytravel, the LEP, and relevant CA Policy Leads. In doing so, officers are ensuring active integration with other major LCR policies and investments, including Energy, Planning, Housing, Skills Strategies and Transport, e.g. the Merseyrail rolling stock replacement programme and Key Route Network upgrades.

The immediate objective of the DIAP is to create a fibre “superspine” to interlink these key assets and all six Local Authority areas, and accelerate the development of more extensive local fibre spines and access networks.

The DIAP also includes a series of Digital Exchanges (DXs), including at least one in each of the six LCR Local Authority areas, to light up the new network and catalyse/enhance digital/creative cluster development.

The Plan is developing a ‘Dig Once’ Policy - installing ducting/fibre whenever the road is being dug up anyway, which saves at least 90% of the average costs of fibre installation, while also enabling rapid deployment and, importantly, minimising disruption to local business/residents. Dig once opportunities include: rail, road, cycleway and bus corridor upgrades, traffic signalling and street lighting replacements, new housing developments, new business parks and premises, plus town centre and other physical regeneration programmes or developments.

Wirral officers continue to be closely involved with the development of the Digital Plan to ensure it complements and enhances our local Growth priorities and ambitions - eg to ensure Birkenhead is included for location of one of the Digital Exchange locations

Work is now underway to produce a detailed Delivery Plan and maximise potential funding opportunities from a variety of sources.

3.3. LCR JOINT ACTIVITY TO ASSESS IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT

In the absence of a firm Brexit Deal at this point, it is difficult to produce a realistic analysis of the local implications that would not be mostly speculation. However it is still important to have as much information as possible about the potential challenges and opportunities to Councils and our residents.

Wirral is therefore linking in with the work that the Local Government Association (LGA) are leading on this to understand the potential implications for Councils and the LGA continue to liaise with Government to highlight the issues that local Councils may face. In particular, we are looking at the LGA analysis to understand the potential risks and opportunities in relation to:

- The economy, businesses, trading and markets
- Workforce and employment issues
- EU funding programmes
- Wider implications for residents eg food prices

Wirral officers are liaising with LCR partners to try to get some understanding of the potential implications for our region eg future funding programmes and potential opportunities for further devolution to the City Region. Again, this will link in with the LGA national approach, with the aim of holding a Regional Brexit Sounding Board to try to gain a much more localised understanding of the potential implications.

3.4. Conclusion

Further updates on all of the above will be brought back to this Committee as the detail emerges in coming months. As previously stated, the above is just a short snapshot of LCR activity, and further detail on all of the most recent developments can be found here <http://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/>

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Devolution arrangements propose the devolution of financial resources to LCR.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/a

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

At this time, no additional cost is expected to be incurred by LCR local authorities as a result of arrangements to deliver the devolution deal.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Wirral, along with City Region partners, continues to brief members and officers; circulate information and raise awareness of LCR developments through a wide range of approaches and communications.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equality implications associated with this report as it deals with the issue of devolution at a strategic level. Equality analysis will be carried out as part of the detailed implementation as appropriate.

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	12 July 2013
Cabinet	8 August 2013
Cabinet and Council	19 September 2013
Cabinet and Council	10 March 2014
Council	19 November 2015
P&P Regeneration & Environment Committee	18 January 2016
P&P Regeneration & Environment Committee	2 March 2016
Council	13 September 2016
Cabinet	14 November 2016
Council	8 December 2016
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	6 December 2016
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	24 January 2017
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	29 March 2017
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	4 July 2017
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	19 September 2017
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	29 November 2017
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	23 January 2018
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	27 th March 2018
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	4 th July 2018