

14 JUNE 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

**DEPARTMENT OF REGENERATION – 2006/07 YEAR END REPORT**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purposes of this report is for Members to note the performance of the Regeneration Department during this period and to ask Members to endorse the priorities the Department is proposing for the next monitoring period.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Performance Monitoring Report (Appendix 1) details performance over the last year highlights those areas of performance where our targets were not met and outlines the remedial action which has/will be taken to address this. The final part of the report looks forward to the next financial year and focuses on the key issues that will be affecting the Department in the next twelve months.
- 2.2 In April 2006 Cultural Services moved from the then Education and Cultural Services Department to the Regeneration Department and the offices for Cultural Services administration were relocated from Hamilton Building and Solar Campus to Westminster House. Work is still going on to restructure the section and fully integrate it with the Regeneration Department.
- 2.3 In 2007/8 Cultural Services will undertake a self assessment using Towards and Excellent Service (TAES), a DCMS developed programme. Regional Commentaries will be produced by the 3 main outside agencies which contribute to Cultural Services; Sport England, The Arts Council and the Museums, Libraries and Archives. The section is also commissioning a major study to produce a Strategic Forward Plan for Cultural Services.

**3.0 SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURAL SERVICES**

- 3.1 The attached Performance Report is very wide-ranging and diverse in its content and application due to the wide range of services delivered by the Department. The following summary therefore highlights those areas of the Departmental Plan that will be of principal interest to Members of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee, namely the work undertaken by the Cultural Services Division.

**4.0 OUTCOMES IN RESPECT OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN AND IMPROVEMENT AGENDA**

- 4.1 Library Service – During 2006/7 seven Information Points were established along with seven video links allowing the Corporate LPSA target to be achieved. Work was undertaken with young people in the "Fulfilling Their Potential" project. This encourages greater ownership by young people of libraries and working with the Children and Young People's Department BEST team a youth forum was held in Seacombe library. Reader development projects included a poetry project in Greasby library with Year 6 pupils

which was featured on Radio Merseyside, a John Siddique poetry performance in Wallasey library and a Christmas Reader's evening in West Kirby library.

- 4.2 Community Services – The kitchen in the Grosvenor Hall was refurbished and fully equipped to provide a training/commercial kitchen from which training programmes for disadvantaged local residents are provided. Leasowe Adventure Playground was refurbished with £230,000 of funding from various sources. The 7 Waves Community Radio station continued to deliver multimedia training with a total of 170 trainees achieving NVQ levels 1 and 2 in radio broadcasting.
- 4.3 Parks and Countryside Service – The new pavilion in Birkenhead Park was opened and most of the restoration scheme completed. The number of Friends of Parks Groups increased from 26 to 30 and a Parks Partnership was formed to represent the groups. During 2006/7 the Lottery funded “Fair Shares” programme was completed which included 3 new skateboard parks and 2 Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). Work was completed on 30 draft park management plans and 47 security audits which will be reported to Scrutiny Committee and ward members.
- 4.4 Sport and Recreation – A new fitness suite was opened in Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre in January which has proved very popular. The Amateur Swimming Association awarded one of 9 national pilot programmes to Wirral to promote swimming to older people. This complemented the decision to provide free swimming to older people which has resulted in an increased usage of up to 400% in some centres. A pilot “Silver Sports” programme with the PCT was also started to encourage older people to take more physical activity. Youth Sports Nights operated successfully in 12 centres and uptake of the Invigor8 regular user programme continued to increase.
- 4.5 Arts and Museums – The Arts and Museums service had its most successful Guitar Festival so far in November with record attendances. The Floral Pavilion's pantomime was also very successful and there was a smooth close down of the Floral in April with Ken Dodd hosting the final concert. Projects undertaken during the year included the Creating the Image 2 visual arts project with looked after children and the Leasowe Lighthouse Heritage Summer project. The Museums Service also hosted many successful exhibitions including The Art of the Stitch and works by renowned maritime artist Charles Napier Hemy.

## 5.0 EXTERNAL CHALLENGE AND INSPECTIONS

- 5.1 The Library Service retained its Chartermark for the second year and the “Get into Reading” project run with Liverpool University was a runner up at the National Health and Social Care Awards.
- 5.2 Community Services were awarded a Grade A for the second successive year by the BCS National Audit Team for the work at the UK Online Centres at Gautby Road and Livingstone Street. The centres usage figures for local people is much higher than the national average and surpassed targets.
- 5.3 The Crematorium and Cemeteries service adopted the Charter for the Bereaved, a national standard for bereavement services. The Allotment service received the national award from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Societies for the best local authority service in authorities with more than 200,000 population. This was the fifth consecutive year. The Parks and Countryside Service retained 3 Green Flags for Vale Park, Ashton Park and Thornton Hough Common.

5.4 The Sport and Recreation Service is submitting each of its leisure centres for a Quest Award. This is a national standard which is externally validated and measures standards in the centres and customer satisfaction. So far the Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre, West Kirby Concourse and the Oval have passed the standard. Working with Technical Services Department energy saving measures have been introduced in most centres. Leisure centres are one of the highest energy users in the Authority.

## 6.0 PERFORMANCE EXCEPTIONS AND PLANNED ACTIONS

6.1 In libraries the number of books and other items issued per head of population did not reach the target. This should now be remedied to a certain extent by the re-instatement of Saturday afternoon openings. The shortfall in the book fund also affects the number of issues. The service also failed to achieve its "Bookstart" targets and actions have been taken to address this. There have been changes to the PSL (formerly Pentra Services) programme which provides support to IT users in libraries and this will be reported separately.

6.2 The Community Services section has now been separated from the Youth and Play Service in the Children and Young People's Department but further work is required to introduce a new staffing structure and complete budget alterations.

6.3 The Parks and Countryside Service is preparing a detailed bid for Wirral Country Park under the Parks for People Programme. To be submitted in September 2007. It plans to produce a further 33 draft park management plans and 44 security audits. Contracts have been retained with Wirral Partnership Homes for grounds maintenance but the number of schools grants maintenance contracts continues to decrease.

6.4 In 2006/7 two new performance indicators were introduced by Sport England. These were for the number of people participating in 3 x 30 minutes physical activity per week and the number of volunteers engaged with sport on Wirral. Wirral was in the bottom quartile nationally for number of people participating in physical activity but in the top quartile for volunteers engaged in sport.

6.5 During 2007/8 there will be a £2.9m refurbishment of the Oval which will provide a completely new entrance and update changing rooms and other facilities. Work has also started on establishing a Sport and Physical Activity Alliance (SPAA) which, with funding from Sport England will assist in bringing together all those involved in promoting and developing sport and physical activity in Wirral.

## 7.0 FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## 8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## 9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## 10.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**11.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**12.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**13.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**15.0 RECOMMENDATION**

15.1 Members are asked to note the performance of the Department between April 2006 and March 2007 and endorse the priorities for service delivery for the next financial year.

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This report was prepared by Jim Lester who can be contacted on 666-4725.