

COUNCIL

14 OCTOBER 2013

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	CENTRAL AND SUPPORT SERVICE
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	JOE BLOTT, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

TRANSFORMATION/CHANGE TEAM

The Change Team are working with Cheshire West and Chester to develop a business case for sharing services, as instructed by Cabinet in July. A full update report on this will be presented to Cabinet in November.

HUMAN RESOURCES/ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LEAVERS

As at 30 September the position on leavers from 2013/14 budget options is as follows:

A total of 253 employees left or are due to leave by December 2013

- 192 volunteers already left
- 18 volunteers have signed and are currently working notice
- 78 employees were issued with notice of which 33 have left.
- Of the 33 -14 did not opt into redeployment

Of the 78 - 36 employees have been redeployed to other posts.

We have 9 people issued with notice who we are currently seeking to redeploy.

We continue to work hard Trade Unions and staff to identify any alternative options and minimise the number of redundancies.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

As part of the Council's Improvement Plan, September saw the launch of the new programme. This is aimed at our senior managers and provides a range of learning opportunities. This is funded from current training budgets.

We are also launching a new Management Development "Essentials" Programme delivered by Internal Officers for all of our managers

Performance Appraisal delivered to senior managers by the end of September.

ELECTED MEMBERS DEVELOPMENT

1. Wirral Elected Member Development Programme is now externally accredited with the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM)

- Only one other Local Authority in the North West has achieved this and was recommended by the Improvement Board
- It brings quality assurance and a level of validation to our Member Development Programme
- So far one Elected Member has achieved the award (with others soon to follow)

2. The 2nd cohort of the Wirral Elected Members Leadership Programme will take place in November

- The Programme is delivered by the LGA
- There are two Modules (Personal & Political Leadership)
- 10 Wirral Elected Members completed as Cohort one.

3. Personal Development Plan (PDP) Reviews will commence in October for all Elected Members

- 49 Elected Members have completed PDPs for 2012/13
- Reviews will pick up any changes to the development needs that may have arisen in the 6 months since the original plans were discussed.

IT SERVICES

DISRUPTION TO IT SERVICES

It was regrettable that a recent power surge meant disruption to the IT Services infrastructure and this was affected for a protracted period over and above other public and partner IT users. IT Services are working closely with Wirral's electrical engineers to improve resilience in the electrical supplies to the Treasury Building.

PROJECTS

Key projects include desktop upgrades and the project to replace the social care application.

BUSINESS PROCESSES

WELFARE REFORM

The authority continues to implement the Government Welfare Reform programme. This has seen the level of contact we receive for both benefits work and revenues collection increase by over 20% from last year with no sign of this reducing as it would normally do half way through the year.

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The national Council Tax Benefits scheme was abolished and replaced by the Council Tax Support Scheme which reflects the reduced level of central funding. The maximum level of support is 78% for people of working age. Pensioners and those assessed as vulnerable or disabled remain protected at 100% awards. Given this change we have continued to review cases to ensure that people are claiming what they should and in the first six months we have correctly identified over 1000 people who have been able to be properly moved into the higher category. However this still means the authority is responsible for collecting on average £220 per annum from 15,000 people who had not previously paid council tax. Many of those residents are making payment and while many are unable to we will do our best to ensure some form of repayment is made to help them meet their new liability.

LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Our scheme to help support emergency payments, which is funded by government grant, continues as expected to increase in numbers of people it offers support to. In the first two months 594 people were helped and in the last two months this has increased by nearly 20% to 710 receiving support with weekly payments regularly totalling £10,000. Officers will now begin a review of the scheme to see what other support mechanisms we, as a council, can consider as well as how this scheme may be altered for future years.

UNDER OCCUPANCY

This is the deduction from claimant's benefits where a room is described as making a property under occupied for the family unit that occupies and is administered by the Council. Initially this saw 4,200 homes affected attracting weekly deduction of benefit of either 14% or 25%. During the year our ongoing work to identify those who should qualify to be exempt from that deduction has seen numbers affected reduce to 3,770. This has been due to identifying carers, disabled persons and other eligible categories that allow bedroom to be exempt and this work continues. The increased rental liability places an increased burden on the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme.

This scheme's grant has nearly been doubled by government this year to help address these changes and a further additional fund has now been made available which will be bid for but the grant only covers around a fifth of the total rent shortfall facing residents and landlords in the social sector.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

The integration of asset/property/Health, Safety and Resilience staff into one unit is now complete.

Report to Cabinet on 7th November will bring forward proposals in respect of office accommodation, disposals and a proposed model for area reviews of council assets area by area and potential for further integration, shared facilities and release of some assets. The report will bring forward a number of larger sites for disposal for other uses.

The new Stanley special school has opened and completes the development of the new building for Pensby Primary School and Stanley Special School, replacing four previous buildings.

Signed: **Dated:**

Councillor Adrian Jones
Cabinet Portfolio Holder