

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. CORPORATE PLAN

The updated Corporate Plan has been adopted by Council and will ensure that the Council's resources are aligned to deliver our vision and priorities. The Council's vision is shared with our partners:

“Wirral will be a place where the vulnerable are safe and protected, where employers want to invest and local businesses thrive, and where good health and an excellent quality of life is within the reach of everyone who lives here.”

The content of the Corporate Plan has been extensively consulted upon with staff, elected members and partners and an Elected Members' event to discuss the draft plan was held on 27th November. A number of amendments were proposed by Members and have been incorporated into a revised version which was debated and agreed at Policy Council on 2nd December 2013.

As in previous years, a delivery plan will now be developed with performance measures and targets which will be subject to regular and robust monitoring and management. The development of directorate plans will also underpin and support the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities.

2. BUDGET

We continue to lobby government about the disproportionate affect on Northern authorities and the precarious financial position of many local authorities recently highlighted by the Local Government Association. It is estimated that the average council in the North West will lose £627 per person by 2017/18 with a greater loss of £632 expected in Wirral, compared with £305 in the South East and an English average of £487 according to a report by the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA).

The level of funding and the savings requirement is unprecedented and puts at risk the delivery of key statutory and essential services. The Council will need to identify further savings of £30.7 million in 2015/16 and £25.1 million savings in 2016/17.

There is only so far we can go with efficiencies savings and a challenge on discretionary spend; there is a link between much discretionary spend and the delivery of statutory/essential services and we must challenge all spend in a way that ensures sustainability over the longer term.

We are seeking ways to make savings and provide best value in all our corporate support services and continue to work on plans with Cheshire West and Cheshire to share services, pool expertise and develop sustainable systems to support the Council in the future through collaboration and making savings through economies of scale.

3. STRATEGIC FINANCE

The main focus of strategic finance has been on ensuring that financial forecasts and assumptions are sound, planning for 2014/15 budget setting process and providing visibility on the challenge moving into 2015/16 and beyond.

We have made improvements in our reporting processes and the level of scrutiny on financial matters. In addition we have sought to align the financial plans to the Corporate Plan and are working on the Commissioning Strategy and plans for the Council.

4. BEDROOM TAX

Following the notice of motion agreed by Council on the 14th October, a useful initial meeting took place involving Councillors Gilchrist and Lewis to discuss practical steps to help those residents who are being adversely affected by the Government's Bedroom Tax. A follow-up meeting will take place shortly with a view to agreeing an action plan.

5. COMBINED AUTHORITY

Government has commenced the statutory consultation period following the submission to establish a Combined Authority. The consultation closes on the 22nd January 2014 and if there is support for the proposal, an order will be laid before Parliament to create the Combined Authority. There will a further opportunity to consider the proposal at a meeting of Council in March 2014 where Elected Members will be asked to approve the creation of a Combined Authority with effect from April 2014.