

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Ann McLachlan
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Governance and Improvement
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Director of Public Health/Head of Policy & Performance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the last report to Council in October there has been significant progress in delivering on our improvement and governance agenda.

1. IMPROVEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 27th September, the Improvement Board requested a report which provided a full review of the Council's progress since the Board was established in February 2012. The Board convened a special meeting on 25th October to consider an early draft of the Improvement Board Review report. Feedback was provided and the report was updated following this meeting.

The Board agreed that this draft report should be subject to wider consultation with external stakeholders and the public to ensure their feedback was captured and incorporated within the review. The draft report was published on the Council's website and the consultation ran from 5th –15th November.

As part of the consultation, Members of the public were invited to provide a comment or raise a question at a public meeting on 15th November. Approximately 35 people attended the public meeting and six Wirral residents submitted questions; in addition the Chair received a letter by hand. The overall tone from the six people submitting questions or comments was to disagree with the review reports findings of considerable improvement in Wirral Council and in the main to ask the Improvement Board to remain.

Recognition of the significant progress made by the Council was received through feedback from a number of external stakeholders including Members of Parliament, other local authorities, partners and local businesses.

The Improvement Board met on the 29th November to consider the review which was updated to reflect the feedback received. They made the following recommendations:

1. The Improvement Board recognises the significant progress made by the Council but also recognises there is still significant risk going forward. However, taking into account the progress we have seen and the public consultation, it recommends that an Improvement Board in its current form is no longer needed

as the Council has the capability and capacity to manage its own improvement process.

2. Given the challenge both to Wirral and local government generally there should be a review of Wirral's progress in March 2014 by the external Board members as suggested in paragraph 85 of the report.
3. The Council and the Board recognise that improvement is a continuous journey. Therefore the Council will need to continue to drive improvement through the future actions suggested in the next steps section of the report.

2. GOVERNANCE

The Council adopted new constitutional arrangements in April 2013. It is therefore now timely to review these arrangements to examine if they are meeting their original intention. Members' views will inform a further review of the Constitution in readiness for the new municipal year. A survey which asks for members' perceptions and experiences will be launched on 18th December 2013 and close on 7th January 2014.

3. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI)

Wirral had an undertaking with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to provide monthly updates about its request-handling performance. This was to be accompanied by a list of any overdue requests, for a three-month period. The period commenced with requests made on 1st July 2013 and ended with those made on 30th September 2013.

The undertaking required that, by the end of this monitoring period, at least 85% of requests be handled within the statutory time limits.

The ICO further required all overdue responses identified in Wirral's correspondence to the commissioner of 25th June 2013 would have received responses by the end of the monitoring period. I am pleased to report as of 1st November 2013, all overdue responses identified in Wirral's correspondence to the Commissioner of 25th June 2013 have now been answered.

FOI response figures for the monitoring period are as follows:

Month	Total FOI's received	Responded in time	Percentage
July 2013	131	114	87%
August 2013	107	94	87.8%
September 2013	96	82	85.4%
Total	334	290	86.8%