

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor George Davies
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CO-ORINDATING CHIEF OFFICER	Head of Neighbourhoods & Engagement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION FOR 16/17 YEAR OLDS

Cabinet recently approved a scheme to provide six units of emergency accommodation for 16/17 year olds in Manor Road, Liscard. This will involve the Council working in partnership with 'Your Housing Group' in an initial two-year pilot.

The proposed scheme will allow for the delivery of emergency accommodation services with support to some of Wirral's most vulnerable young people in accordance with Homelessness and Children and Young People's Department (CYPD) statutory duties. This will be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This service will enable a full assessment of need together with the most appropriate referral route for the young person to move on in a planned way. The scheme will also enable efficiency savings within this area of work.

2. WIRRAL COUNCIL EMPTY PROPERTY GRANT

In this financial year, 43 small Empty Property Grants of up to a maximum of £3000 per grant have been completed. This has assisted in securing in the region of £350,000 of private match funding for the Council's investment. This has also resulted in 43 new homes for Wirral's residents and the removal of a significant number of blights to street scenes throughout the borough. There are a further 38 Empty Property Grants that we expect to complete in this financial year thus generating 38 new homes and leveraging in more than a further £300,000. These will contribute to an increased New Homes Bonus allocation.

3. NATIONAL EMPTY HOMES LOAN FUND

Wirral Council was recently accepted as a project partner to assist in the promotion and delivery of the new central government funded National Empty Homes Loan product administered by the Empty Homes organisation with support from Ecology Building Society. Loans are available for up to £15,000

repayable by the owner over a 5 year period at a fixed interest rate of 5%. Since becoming involved in this initiative, Wirral Council has been one of the most proactive local authorities in the region by assisting in the preparation and submission of more than 10 loan applications already with approximately £150,000 secured from this government fund with a further £50,000 of property owners' capital expected to be invested in Wirral's housing stock. Further efforts will continue to be made to raise the profile of this product and to encourage vacant property owners to apply for funds to refurbish their properties for occupation to provide much needed homes. These will also contribute to an increased New Homes Bonus allocation.

4. NEW DEVELOPMENT SCHEME, LAIRD STREET, BIRKENHEAD

I am pleased to be able to advise that work has now commenced on the redevelopment of a key HMRI site off Laird Street in North Birkenhead. The Council's private sector partner Keepmoat has started Phase 2 of its development programme and over the next three years will deliver 125 much needed new houses for both open market sale and for rent from Magenta Living. This multi million pound mixed tenure development will add to the success of the Phase 1 redevelopment at the St Josephs site and will continue the regeneration of this area. The earlier than expected commencement of the Phase 2 development work continues on the achievement of assembling the majority of the site and shows a growing confidence in the area.

5. WIRRAL SAFE AND WARM CAMPAIGN

A campaign to help people across Wirral to stay safe and warm in their homes during the cold winter months was launched at Wallasey Town Hall last month. The annual 'Stay Safe and Warm' campaign aims to raise awareness of the dangers faced by people who struggle to keep warm during the cold months, and highlight the help and support available to them. This can range from organising safe, temporary heating, to putting people in touch with specialist guidance on managing their fuel bills.

This is the second year the campaign has run in Wirral. Last year, a total of 132 people received one-to-one support to help them through the winter months. As well as a wide range of advice provided, last year's campaign also saw a total of 86 emergency heaters, 130 thermal blankets and 80 electric blankets supplied through partners to those in need.

Partners include housing providers, Merseyside Fire Support Network and Wirral based charities such as Age UK Wirral and Energy Projects Plus, who will be working together to identify people who are at risk and give them advice and support. The Council acts as a central co-ordinator for referrals through a Safe & Warm telephone advice line.