

COUNCIL

10th March 2014

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	COUNCILLOR GEORGE DAVIES
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Neighbourhoods, Housing and Engagement
CO-ORINDATING CHIEF OFFICER	Emma Degg

Executive Summary

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

1. NEIGHBOURHOODS PROGRAMME

Constituency Committees are currently meeting for the third time this financial year, making decisions on activity priorities, allocated budget spend, and committee handbooks.

A report will be presented to Cabinet on 13/03/14 detailing progress on Governance, Delivery, Community Engagement and Constituency Budgets issues.

A budget resolution at Cabinet on 12/02/14 allocated £200,000 for 2014/2015 to further develop Constituency Committees.

2. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Merseyside has recently announced the continued provision of funding to Community Safety Partnerships for 2014-15.

The Home Office have changed funding rules for 2014-15 by removing all ring fences which had previously separated Policing Grant funds, which pays for the operation of Merseyside Police, from grants to Community Safety Partnerships.

However, following consultation with the Chief Constable, it was decided to award the grant in line with the previous years grant totals.

The Home Office also imposed a reduction of 4.8% on 2013-14 funding levels and this is reflected in the grant level awarded to Merseyside Community Safety Partnerships.

The total grant received from the PCC for Wirral is £407,488 and incorporates all previously ring fenced funding streams which will enable us to continue to support the Drugs Intervention Programme, Youth Offending Team (YOT), Anti Social Behaviour Team, Positive Futures and the Wirral Community Safety Partnership.

3. NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The past few months has seen the completion and start on site of a number of key new affordable housing schemes across Wirral.

Sanctuary Housing Group commenced building works in December 2013 on their new development of 58 one and two bedroom apartments at Wharf Street in Port Sunlight. These are expected to complete in March 2015 with the design being in keeping with the local area.

December also saw the completion by Magenta Living of 30 new two bedroom homes at Chapelhill Road in Moreton and four new two bedroom houses at the former Great Eastern pub site in New Ferry. The remaining six units will be completed by March 2014.

In January, LHT completed the development of 10 two bedroom houses at the former care home site at Feltree House in Beechwood and will follow with a further eight units by March 2014.

These schemes alone see a total of 116 new affordable homes being delivered with a combined investment of over £12.7 million of which £2.38 million has been secured as grant from the Homes and Communities Agency. Each scheme has seen an emphasis on the use of local labour.

4. HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY

As part of the Council's commitment to continue to support improvements in home energy efficiency, Energy Projects Plus were appointed in January this year to deliver Phase 1 of a focussed campaign in the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward. This will increase the support available to make homes warmer and reduce energy bills, thereby assisting to reduce fuel poverty. This will include improvements to properties where households meet criteria which will be funded via a variety of grants including the Energy Company Obligations, Green Deal, Capital Programme Initiatives (Cosy Homes Heating), Health through Warmth and Cosy Loans. This area was chosen due to its above-average rate of fuel poverty and low levels of energy efficiency. It also contains areas with the highest estimated rates of fuel poverty in the borough.

The 2nd Collective Energy Switch, supported by all Liverpool City Region local authorities was launched in January. The campaign enables people to come together and benefit from increased buying power in order to access lower energy tariffs.

As of 19 January 2014, over 1500 people have registered their interest so far. 413 of these are Wirral residents.

Over 4,600 registered in the last Merseyside Collective Switch with nearly 700 switching which saved residents a total of £76,435 per year on the energy bills and an average saving of £110 per year for those households that switched energy suppliers. 49% of those households who switched were from the Wirral area and will benefit from a total saving of £20,598 per year in energy bills.