

**CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT**

<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>Councillor Pat Hackett</b>
<b>CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR</b>	<b>Economy</b>
<b>CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER</b>	<b>Kevin Adderley, Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</b>

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**1. BIRKENHEAD TOWN CENTRE**

The Council entered into a twelve month lock out agreement with Neptune Developments in October 2013 to allow them to work up a master plan for the redevelopment of Birkenhead Town Centre. The key objective of the proposal is to allow the town to re-establish itself as the principle retail destination for Wirral residents. Neptune are formulating plans which will include for the upgrading and remodelling of part of the Grange Precinct including the site of Birkenhead Market and the development of the three Council owned sites on Europa Boulevard to improve and increase the food/retail offer for the Town. The proposals are expected to be presented to the Council in February 2015.

**2. TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLANS – PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15**

In 2011 the Council's Cabinet approved a report titled Town, District and Local Centre Study & Delivery Framework and it was agreed that Officers undertake a series of Action Plans for individual retail centres on a phased basis.

The Action Plans will address a wide range of issues pertinent to each area's individual circumstances and will include such things as; traffic management & parking, potential environmental improvements and options for local marketing of retail centres. The plans will be owned and driven forward by local traders and community representatives, as it is they who know their business and the area best.

In 2014/15 it is proposed to undertake action plans in the following areas

- Eastham (Mill Park Drive/New Chester Rd)
- Laird Street
- Lower Bebington (Church Rd)
- Oxtown Village
- Upton Village
- West Kirby

It is envisaged that these will be completed by December 2015.

### **3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

Following the designation of Unity in Our Community as the neighbourhood planning forum for Leasowe (by Council on 14 July 2014), the Borough now has three active neighbourhood planning forums that have been designated to prepare their own planning proposals under the Localism Act - at Leasowe, Devonshire Park and Hoylake.

The Hoylake Community Planning Forum are finalising their draft proposals and expect to publish them for public consultation before the end of the year. The Devonshire Park Neighbourhood Forum have now prepared their final proposals and are waiting for them to be checked before they are formally submitted to the Council for independent examination and local referendum.

### **4. EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT GATEWAY PROGRAMME**

In 2013 the Liverpool City Region (LCR) submitted a proposal for a share of £50m to tackle youth unemployment via funds made available to England's City Deal areas from underspend in the Government's Youth Contract. The LCR subsequently received £5.9m, the largest allocation across all City Deal areas, to deliver an employment support programme with an additional flexible budget to fund bespoke goods/services to support young people into employment.

Funding will be allocated to local authority areas based on levels of youth unemployment. The funding model within the proposal anticipates securing further European Funds to the programme

### **5. EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS: HEALTH RELATED WORKLESSNESS PROGRAMME**

The Health Related Worklessness Programme has been developed by Wirral Council's Investment Strategy Team and is one of a suite of Governments Transforming Public Services Projects led by Wirral's Public Service Board.

Wirral has persistent levels of worklessness that exceed regional/national averages; a significant majority attributable to residents with a health condition; specifically mental health. There are significant spatial concentrations across the borough, eg: the parliamentary constituency of Birkenhead has the highest concentration with headline costs of Health Related Worklessness in excess of £69m+ per annum (based on New Economy for Manchester Cost Benefit Analysis Model - Treasury Green Book)

Officers are working with partners on the development phase which involves extensive research and pilot projects and are developing a number of funding bids to support progress.

### **6. MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE (MDA)**

Wirral is currently in the Chair of the Mersey Dee Alliance for 2014/15 and to date has overseen a revision of the partnerships priorities and changes to the structure to enable it to focus on strategic transport and skills issues across the travel to work area (encompassing Flintshire, Wrexham, Denbighshire, Cheshire West and Chester and Wirral).

Over the last three months, a number of key meetings have taken place with the Secretary of State for Wales, the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and Cllr Hackett gave a presentation to a Wales Policy Forum in June.

The focus for the MDA over the next two months will be further raising the profile of the Alliance, co-ordinating cross border policy matters on transport matters, rail modernisation and labour market issues.