

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	SUPPORT SERVICES
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	JOE BLOTT

Executive Summary

1. FINANCIAL SERVICE

The Council Annual Statement of Accounts 2013/14 had to be published by 30 September 2014. The draft Accounts were subject to review by the External Auditors (Grant Thornton). The Audit Findings Report and Value for Money Report were presented to Audit & Risk Management Committee on 17 September. Both demonstrate the continuing improvements being made by this Council.

The financial position reported in June remains unchanged. Especially rewarding is that all the areas of review are rated as 'green'. This is an excellent outcome.

The Value for Money Report builds upon the comments in the Audit Findings Report which state the Council has suitable arrangements in place for VFM. For the past few years the Council has been deemed not to have suitable arrangements, and in 2012/13 the Audit Report reported all areas as 'red' but with a Direction of Travel of 'amber' acknowledging progress was being made. The 2013/14 report includes 3 'green' ratings and 3 'amber' ratings which is another excellent outcome.

2. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The first phase of major office rationalisation has taken place with the relocation of staff from Acre Lane to Birkenhead Town Hall. Two services remain at Acre Lane - the music service, which is relocating back to the Hospital School and the school library service which is relocating to a commercial unit owned by the Council near Cammell Lairds. It is intended Acre Lane will be empty by December, with disposal of the site in the first half of 2015.

The new £390,000 soft play and relaxation centre for young people with profound needs was opened at Europa Pools on 10 September.

Negotiations continue with the new owners of Tranmere Rovers in respect of the Ingleborough/Solar Campus proposals, which have now received planning approval.

Three academy transfers, Wallasey School, Townfield Primary and the Pupil Referral Unit (EMAP) continue to be progressed.

3. HEALTH, SAFETY & RESILIENCE

No major issues to raise. The Open Golf tournament went very well and the Council's Health, Safety & Resilience Team were heavily involved in the planning and delivery of the event, including the Open Golf Ambassadors who have been greatly praised in the media and by all partners.

The next induction session for the Wirral Emergency Volunteers Scheme (WEVS) took place on 18th September. 40 volunteers attended, increasing the number of

volunteers to just above 100. These volunteers will assist the Council in times of emergency, by undertaking roles such as befriending at emergency rest centres, flood wardens, snow clearance, etc. Following their induction, volunteers will undertake specific training to enhance their skills to undertake whatever roles they wish to volunteer for.

4. IT

IT work is progressing well. The largest project, Windows 7 rollout, is on schedule including deployment to Members throughout November. Other aspects of work are well underway including email migration, the main network tender, developing wifi across the corporate buildings, as well as investment in additional servers, and security products.

Cross party Members meeting took place on 19 September to consult on Members' IT requirements. Members are encouraged to raise queries with their nominated representatives.

6 FUTURE COUNCIL/ ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The Chief Executive opened statutory Consultation with the Trade Unions under section 188 on the 8 September 2014.

To deliver the agreed budget saving of £9.4M for remodelling the Council structures and the impact of other in house savings there is reduction in the numbers of jobs required in the future.

As part of our commitment to minimising redundancies we have so far identified 190 volunteers suitable for redundancy. Of those moving through this process:

- 139 employees have firm offers of Voluntary Redundancy, saving £4,157,768 per annum, at a cost of £2,500,000 this year (including year one pension strain and costs of our enhanced severance scheme).
- We have identified a further thirty posts from volunteers that may be suitable to allow a postholder to leave and redeploy another employee, who is in a redundancy position, into their post.

The Council continues to work closely with Trade Unions and managers to minimise the number of compulsory redundancies.

7 HR POLICY UPDATE

Audit and Risk Management Committee considered the following policies on 17 September 2014:

- New Dignity at Work procedure and supporting documents
- Changes to Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Legal updates to Whistleblowing policy

A training and communication programme is in place to ensure that managers and employees are updated and aware of their role in working with the new policies.

These new and updated policies have been shared with trade unions and represent significant support for our staff.