

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Phil Davies
CABINET PORTFOLIO	Leader of the Council
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Acting Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Combined Authority continues to progress a number of significant actions to drive economic growth across the City Region. These include:

- The City Region secured £232 million of Growth Deal funding and the first tranche will be available for investment from April 2015. Three transport schemes, with a total cost of £28 million, have been identified in the Growth Deal to start delivery in 2015/16. These are projected to support the creation of 1,329 jobs and increase economic output by £79 million per year.
- The City Region's ambitious long-term rail strategy was recently approved, ensuring the rail network meets the needs of the City Region over the next 30 years, as well as supporting its ongoing economic growth and regeneration and its potential contribution to the wider UK economy.
- Considerable work is taking place to ensure the most benefit from High Speed 2, including a campaign to secure a dedicated link to the high speed network into the City Region.

Extensive partnership work continues to take place across the wider sub-region; the Combined Authority has amended the constitution to permit associate membership and West Lancashire has now become an associate member.

At its meeting on 13th February, the Combined Authority considered proposals for setting the Mersey Tunnel tolls for 2015/16. Following a discussion, the Authority agreed that both the Cash Toll and the Fast Tag Toll for 2015/16 should be frozen at the 2014/15 levels. The CA also proposed to review the whole arrangements in relation to Tunnel Costs and Tolls, particularly in light of the current devolution agenda.

A Task Group, to include myself as Chair of the Combined Authority, and representatives of both the Merseytravel Committee and the Combined Authority, is looking at the issues and will report back in the coming months.

The Combined Authority continues to negotiate with Government for increased devolution of powers and funding to the City Region. I will continue to update Council on developments in this area.

2. CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

Council recently agreed its Budget and Council Tax levels for 2015-16 which has included a Council Tax freeze for local residents at 2014-15 levels.

As part of the 2015-16 budget, we have been required to find savings of £38 million for the forthcoming financial year alone in addition to the £151 million savings since 2010. We still require further savings of approximately £70 million by the end of 2018, as a result of Government austerity measures; by 2017 our Government grant will have reduced by 57%.

In this context it is important that we start planning immediately for how we will provide services to our residents in the future, exploring ways in which we can work with our partners and communities to maximise our resources and deliver better outcomes for our residents.

Council will be asked to agree a new three year corporate plan in July as part of its annual Policy Council. I am committed to ensuring that all Elected Members have an opportunity to take part in the discussions about the future design of Council services.

3. HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD – PEER REVIEW

Wirral recently invited an external team of experts to complete a peer review of our Health and Wellbeing Board to provide external challenge on what's working well and areas for improvement in our current arrangements. The review was a very positive experience which involved partners across Wirral's public sector. The peer team commented that they had engaged with 'passionate, caring and committed people at every level who demonstrate their desire to make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of the community'.

Key areas that the peer team highlighted for further consideration include:

- Agree a compelling narrative that describes the Wirral of the future to provide a clear direction and to harness your capacity
- There is good work happening for 'Place' and good work for 'People' but they need to be more connected
- Be clear about how the health and wellbeing system can move from where it is now to where it needs to be and use this to further engage staff, providers, partners and the community
- There are long standing challenges in the health and wellbeing of the population, a combined and focused approach has greater potential to deliver success

The Health and Wellbeing Board will explore these findings in more detail and consider how we respond to these issues. The development of a longer term partnership vision for Wirral will be aligned with the Council's development of its new corporate plan and wider review of partnership arrangements.

4. LGC AWARDS

I am delighted as Leader that Wirral Council was shortlisted for four awards as part of the prestigious 2015 LGC awards, which recognise excellence in local government.

The awards we have been shortlisted for include 'Efficiency', 'Entrepreneurial Council of the Year' and 'Driving Growth'. We have also been shortlisted for 'Most Improved Council' in recognition from the significant progress that we have made in recent years to deliver rapid and sustainable improvements.

I recognise that this success has been as a result of the hard work of all Elected Members, staff and partners and the speed of our improvements are held up as a true example of sector led improvement at its best.

We have opened this Council up to external challenge and scrutiny through inviting the LGA to work with us and establish Wirral's Improvement Board and through a series of peer challenges.

I am also extremely proud that our work to improve Wirral's economy for this and future generations is once again being recognised on a national scale.

I am proud of what we have achieved and look forward to hearing whether we are successful at an awards ceremony in March.