

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor George Davies
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Neighbourhoods, Housing and Engagement
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Kevin Adderley, Strategic Director-Regeneration and Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. ENABLING NEW HOUSING SUPPLY

Quarter 3 of 2014/15 saw the completion of 135 affordable housing units in Wirral, which exceeded the target of 120 units to be delivered in quarter 3. Completions included the final phases of the site at the former St Benedict's School site, New Hey Road for Magenta Living which saw 76 homes with a mixture of house types for Affordable Rent, bringing in £9.57million inward investment. Your Housing Group completed the final phase of 18 mixed units at the former Poulton Primary School site for Affordable Rent, which saw £1.71million inward investment, of which £245,450 was Homes and Communities Agency grant. In addition, a final phase at Hamilton Road in New Brighton for Wirral Methodist Housing Association saw 24 two-bed apartments completed for Affordable Rent, seeing £2.87million inward investment, of which £624,000 was Homes and Communities Agency grant.

In addition, Quarter 3 saw first time buyers being assisted onto the housing ladder, there were 10 households who utilised the Government's Help To Buy equity loan to purchase a new home across sites in Birkenhead North, Eastham and Woodchurch. In addition, the site in Eastham, Carlett Glade saw completion of three units (1 x two-bed house and 2 x three-bed houses) for Shared Ownership for Magenta Living. These units were secured using planning gain and all three have already been reserved. Quarter 3 also saw four empty properties brought back into use, three through Riverside Housing Association's Own Place scheme which assists purchasers with a 25% discount and one through the Council's HOUSED scheme which sees the property being refurbished to a high standard and sold at a 10% discount.

During Quarter 3, demolition commenced on the Brown Cow public house in Bebington, which will see 26 units (6 x one-bed apartments and 20 x two-bed apartments) for Affordable Rent being completed in 2015/16. This scheme will see inward of investment of £2.76million, of which £390,000 is Homes and Communities Agency grant.

2. REVISED PROPERTY POOL PLUS POLICY

January 2015 has seen the revised Allocations Policy for the Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme introduced. The Property Pool Plus Policy has been updated primarily due to government

and legislative changes affecting housing allocations but also to make amendments to reflect lessons learnt during the first year of operating Property Pool Plus. The Sub Regional partners undertook an extensive consultation exercise during 2014 on the proposed changes which identified the majority were in favour. Main changes included:-

- Refusing access to the housing register due to an applicant or a member of the household's behaviour including but not exclusive – serious assault, conviction of use or possession of offensive weapons.
- Better support for Armed Forces and reserve personnel;
- Changes on responding to Homelessness applicants
- Changes to the Bedroom Standard enabling an additional bedroom in circumstances for children with disabilities on the high or middle rate care component of Disability Living Allowance, a non- resident carer or for foster children.