

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

2014/15 saw the completion of 322 affordable housing units in Wirral, exceeding the target of 300 units.

Hillside Court in Tranmere, a Regenda development of 8 two-bed bungalows for Affordable Rent has commenced on site. The development will see investment of 0.79million. Another scheme, Urmson Road in Liscard for Wirral Methodist Housing Association has also commenced on site. This development is for 12 two-bed apartments for Affordable Rent and will see investment of £1.37million.

2. ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Liverpool City Region Collective Energy Switch was shortlisted by the UK Housing Awards which took place in London in April. The Switch received recognition in the Campaign of the Year category. The fourth round of switching took place in March and resulted in the best-ever energy bill saving for residents, which averaged £275 for each household. 936 Wirral households registered for the offer with scheme manager Energy Projects Plus.

Energy Projects Plus have begun their face-to-face engagement with residents in four areas of Birkenhead & Tranmere, where up to a quarter of households suffer from fuel poverty. Staff from Energy Projects Plus are speaking to residents about possible solutions to fuel poverty. In tandem, they're also training staff from local agencies to better understand how residents can be supported to reduce energy bills.

The Council has submitted its two-yearly progress report to Government under the Home Energy Conservation Act. The report provides an update on activity in the Borough to reduce energy use in housing and ultimately to reduce CO₂ emissions. The report shows that energy efficiency programmes have had a positive impact in the Borough. In Wirral between 2008 and 2012 (latest data), average standard electricity consumption in homes has fallen by 7.2% and average gas consumption has fallen by 19.4%. CO₂ emissions from the domestic sector have fallen in Wirral by 13.3% between 2005 and 2012, compared to average 10.5% decreases in both the Liverpool City Region and the North West.

3. SELECTIVE LICENSING

The Council will be commencing its Selective Licensing Scheme in 4 areas within Tranmere, Birkenhead and Wallasey on 1st July aimed at radically improving the quality of private rented property and the standard of management of properties in these areas.

Private landlords in these areas will legally require a license if they want to continue to rent a property in these areas.

Work is ongoing with teams across the Council and external agencies including Street-scene, Anti-social behaviour team and Environmental Health to ensure that landlords and tenants are aware of their obligations and to give them skills so that they are better able to manage their properties and obligations

4. HOUSING REGENERATION IN BIRKENHEAD

On the 30th of April 2015, the Council took possession of the remaining privately owned interests at Milner Street in Birkenhead. This followed the confirmation of a Compulsory Purchase Order and finalises the assembly of the St James Gate site currently being redeveloped by Keepmoat. Following the demolition of the remaining houses, this popular housing redevelopment should be completed later this year. Keepmoat are currently developing plans for their next phase of development on Station & Tyrer Streets close to Birkenhead North Station.

5. CONTROLLED DRINKING ENVIRONMENT – DEVELOPMENT OF 2 PILOT SERVICES

A successful bid was submitted to Public Health, by the Supported Housing and Homeless Division, for the development of two Controlled Drinking Environments (CDE's), one located at Birkenhead YMCA and the second at Mary Cole House (Wirral Churches Ark).

The services have been operational for slightly over 12 months and have achieved significant successes: Between January and December 2014, there were 3922 attendances across both CDE's; since the CDE's became operational, alcohol-related crime has reduced by 30% in the Birkenhead area when compared with previous years; 12 Clients have undertaken detoxification as consequence of attending the CDE's; 2 Clients have attended Community Rehabilitation Projects; 10 Clients have been assisted to engage with Arch Initiatives.

6. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION FOR 16 & 17 YEAR OLDS

During 2014 the Supported Housing Division of the Regeneration & Environment Directorate and colleagues from CYPD worked in partnership to develop a scheme intended to provide emergency accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds. A Six-bedroomed accommodation, located in Wallasey, was leased to Your Housing Group (YHG), a Supporting People funded provider of high-quality services for young people. YHG completed significant internal refurbishment and, in May 2014, the service began accepting clients.

Since opening in May 2014, the service has accommodated 37 16 & 17 year olds, with 6 people currently in residence. Of these 37 16 & 17 year olds that have left the service: 87% have moved-on in a positive, planned manner; 100% to claim appropriate benefits; 83% to access Education, Training or Employment; 27% signposted to other agencies for specialist support; 32% to access substance misuse support

7. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SINGLE HOMELESS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS PROJECT

In June 2014, Central Government announced the opportunity for local authorities to bid for funding in order to give them the resources to work with partners such as health and probation services and Jobcentre Plus; and the space to innovate to improve services for those who would not be eligible for the main homelessness duty (primarily single people without dependents).

Wirral, along with the other Merseyside Councils were successful in their application for funding and have been awarded £262,000 to develop a cross-authority service that will provide intensive support to entrenched, chaotic rough sleepers.

8. HOME FROM HOME SERVICE

Officers within Supported Housing have been working in partnership with Adult Social Care to develop a service to offer short term accommodation as an alternative to Residential Care or prolonged stay in hospital. Four flats have been made available by Social Landlords and have been adapted to meet the requirements of people with a range of disabilities (People who will benefit from the service include those recovering from temporary situations, like broken limbs / hips, or people trying to rebuild their life and skills after serious incidents such as amputations, stroke or head injury). The service is intended for clients who would require preparatory or installation work for adaptations in their normal home. Whilst adaptations are taking place Home from Home will provide an opportunity for recovery work in a natural setting. People will be supported to live sustainable and independent lives through access to housing, health and social care services, in a friendly and supportive setting rather than remaining in hospital or a care home.

9. MAINSTAY -SUPPORTED HOUSING GATEWAY

In 2012, the Liverpool City Region (LCR), received £280,000 funding from DCLG to facilitate work across the six LCR LA's to reduce levels of homelessness, and to enable a coordinated response to the issues of homelessness across the local authority areas. The 6 LCR LA's agreed the need for the development of a single point of access to homeless services for vulnerable people and commissioned Capita to develop a web-based referral system, implementation to be supported by Liverpool YMCA.

The Gateway system acts as a "virtual" single point of access for homeless people needing accommodation based or floating support services. People who require these services can now present at an 'assessment point' (provided at a range of services across the Borough) and they will receive a common assessment and as a result will be referred to the most appropriate service(s) that will meet their need.