

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Chris Meaden
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Leisure, Sport and Culture
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Clare Fish, Strategic Director- Families & Wellbeing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY & BIRKENHEAD PRIORY

The Cabinet has decided to reverse the previously agreed budget option, to facilitate the exploration of a new management arrangement for the Williamson and the Priory through a service level arrangement with National Museums Liverpool. Discussions around these arrangements are currently taking place and will hopefully lead to new opportunities for the development of community galleries alongside the already existing gallery spaces. The Council will also work with the Friends Group and Members of the Strategic Shadow Board in developing ideas for the future. It is anticipated that a proposal and timeline will emerge by the end of July 2015 for discussion with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member

2. FLORAL PAVILION

The Floral continues to provide a diverse range of entertainment for the people of Wirral. Work is currently underway to look at various ways in which the current subsidy can be reduced as well as exploring new opportunities for future productions and events.

3. LIBRARIES

The changes to our 15 Community Libraries have been in place since the 2nd March 2015 and since that time staff and users have been working to maximise the use of the sites and I am pleased how well this change has gone. We are keeping this change under review and I am encouraged by the supportive reaction we have received from groups and individuals that have come forward to help the service. It is positive that we are working with local interested groups so quickly and I hope this trend will very much continue.

Our Library service continues to successfully provide a wide range of activities that support the cultural and learning aspects of a Library service. Once again we will be promoting the Summer Reading Challenge focused on children and I am pleased that we have 15 young volunteers who are helping promote and encourage reading amongst the borough's young. This is a great way of getting children involved in reading and then supporting others to get involved and I do hope as in previous years Wirral will see big numbers taking up this reading challenge.

4. LEISURE SERVICES

Phase 1 of the refurbishment works at West Kirby Concourse is now complete and the new state-of-the-art fitness suite was opened by The Mayor on 11th June 2015. Phase 2, which includes the upgrading of the catering facilities and aerobics suite, will be completed by the end of July 2015. We have had 3500 users of the Fitness Suite in 12 days and 280 new customers in terms of sign ups to an Invigor8 product.

The new facilities at Guinea Gap continue to go from strength to strength with over 1200 new customers signed up on to the Invigor8 membership scheme. The Information Manager to the Community Safety Partnership is reporting a shift of ASB away from Seacombe area towards New Brighton. We hope to show in subsequent weeks that the opening of the GG facility is directly contributing towards a reduction in the ASB. Sport Development is now operating a Doorstep Club on Tuesday evenings attracting up to 35 young people each week ages 14yrs to 22 years.

A bid for £150k has been submitted to Sport England to enhance the capital project monies for the refurbishment of the changing facilities at West Kirby Marine Lake. The new changing facilities will be DDA compliant and augment the existing facilities at the Lake.

The National Citizens Service project is in its 5th year of delivery and the first cohort of this year's students will be put through their paces in mid-July. Reports from the previous 'projects' indicate that the children engaged in the scheme (16 – 19 years) gain life changing experiences that they will remember all their lives. Local communities benefit also, in that the children get involved in the development of local projects. Sports Development is holding an open day in on Thursday July 23rd between 2 – 4pm when councillors and officers will be able to see at first hand the NCS project in 'full swing', meet the young people and witness the grand opening of the refurbished toilet and shower block at Thurstaston.

5. PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

Our successful Junior Rangers summer outreach programme, which we ran in partnership with the Pyramids Shopping Centre in Birkenhead, recently, won a Purple Apple Marketing award for Corporate Social Responsibility. The programme will be taking place again this year throughout the school summer holidays. The Rangers will be running sessions every Thursday for six weeks and you will be delighted to hear that the Gruffalo will be making an appearance during one of the sessions. Virtual Guided Tours of New York's Central Park will also feature and we will also be providing virtual guided tours of Birkenhead Park to a New York audience.

The Mayor recently visited Harrison Park in Wallasey to present certificates to local people aged between 16 and 24 who have taken part in the Princes Trust training scheme. These young people have recently renovated the fountain in Harrison Park, painted the football pavilion and created planters for the park; this is a great example of partnership working with the Friends of Harrison Park, Parks and Countryside staff and the Princes Trust. Thanks to all involved.

You may also have heard that there are now Fairies in Vale Park. It is fantastic to see the fairies visitors (children and grandchildren) being enlightened by this wonderful fairy village. The wishing stone, stolen years ago by the trolls, has been returned with the help of our wonderful Parks & Gardens staff and I would like to thank everyone involved at Vale Park.

In the recent Charter for the Bereaved Assessments, we have been assessed as providing a strong 'Silver' standard for burials and Landican's crematorium achieved the 'Gold' standard accreditation. These standards are used to help to achieve a dignified bereavement service for everyone who uses our services.

The Parks & Countryside Team, in partnership with members of Wirral's strong and active Allotments community have carried out a great deal of very positive work together over the last year to improve the council's allotments processes and create a 5 year allotments partnership strategy and improvement plans. I would like to thank everyone involved for their input. Allotments are important for people's health and wellbeing as well as contributing to climate resilience and biodiversity. The formal consultation on the draft strategy is now underway.

Play Area refurbishments have been completed at Oakdale Park, Earlston Gardens, The Puddydale and Eastham Rake Play Area.

Bee-friendly planting of white, pink and blue lavenders has been undertaken at Vale Park, Wallasey Central Park and Rake Lane Cemetery.

Work is under way on producing the new ten year Wirral Playing Pitch Strategy, with summer sports data collection taking place in June and July.

The wildflower meadow at the Red Noses and Yellow Noses on New Brighton seafront is looking blooming lovely. Now in its fourth year the meadow is a partnership project between Landlife and Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Service and is funded by the Marine Point development.

Our Parks & Countryside horticultural apprentices have all now successfully completed their Horticulture NVQ level 2, which is great news. Over the last 18 months of so, our Parks & Countryside apprentices have gained experience across the wide range of work our Parks & Countryside service carries out including caring for our country parks, highway verge maintenance, planting out of bedding, mowing, general horticulture, fine turf work and maintenance of machines and equipment. To continue this positive work, four of our apprentices will soon be starting Advanced Apprenticeships in the Parks and Countryside team. I would like to thank all of our current apprentices and hope they will all find their time with us has been helpful in their future careers