

**CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT**

<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>Councillor Phil Davies</b>
<b>CABINET PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>
<b>CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER</b>	<b>Eric Robinson, Chief Executive</b>

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**1. WIRRAL PLAN: 2020 VISION**

Council met on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and approved an ambitious, progressive and pragmatic Council Plan, setting out a five year vision for Wirral and committing to 20 pledges that we will deliver by 2020. I have been clear from the outset that the Council cannot and should not deliver these priorities alone, and I am delighted that Wirral partners have signed up to all of the 20 pledges and the plan will now be known as the Wirral Plan. This means that our collective resources will be targeted at the delivery of the plan and that the totality of public resources available in Wirral, nearly £2 billion every year, will be invested towards achieving those 20 Pledges to improve the lives of local people.

This is a big achievement for Wirral. We have always worked well in partnership but this goes much further; now we will be working to one shared set of goals, we are working towards major integration projects with our partners and we have recognised that our collective power puts us in a much stronger position to create a better quality of life for Wirral residents.

We have recently launched a Resident's Survey to hear directly from local people about what is important to them, and how they want to improve Wirral and make this borough an even better place to live. Knowing what our residents need and want is the fundamental principle upon which our new approach is built. The findings of the resident survey will be available in December 2015 and will enable the Council and its partners to work towards securing the outcomes that local people tell us are important to them.

Work is well underway to develop the plans and strategies that will be required to deliver the 20 pledges. The first phase of the delivery plan will be reported to Cabinet on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 which sets out the direction of travel for this work. A range of strategies are in development and will be reported to Cabinet prior to a final delivery plan in February 2016 which will fully align our plans with a five year budget strategy.

**2. WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP**

The second Wirral Partnership summit held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015 was a resounding success, attended by our main partners from the public, private and

voluntary sectors, all of whom are all committed to working collectively and sharing resources in the best interest of Wirral residents.

At the summit, partners formally signed up to deliver the Wirral Plan and I am delighted that 8 of the pledges will now be led by a partner organisation working closely with all relevant stakeholders.

It is now proposed that I will chair a meeting of the Wirral Partnership every four months to review progress on delivering the pledges set out in the Wirral Plan. An officer delivery group has also been established to oversee the implementation of the plan who will meet on a more frequent basis to ensure we are on track to deliver our plans.

### 3. DEVOLUTION

A great deal of work continues to take place across the Liverpool City Region on our devolution proposals. We sent our first submission to Government at the start of the month and we have had some initial contact and meetings with the civil service and ministers. We are also talking to a range of stakeholders about these proposals including businesses and public sector partners.

Negotiations will continue with Government over the next few weeks and months with initial details of our devolution expected in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in November 2015.

### 4. GROWTH STRATEGY

Significant progress has been made in developing the strategic framework that will enable the Council and its partners to deliver the growth outlined within the 2020 Vision. The pledges set out a series of challenging growth targets. These targets will be achieved by having in place a much more integrated and focussed growth strategy – led by the Council but delivered in partnership. This approach will build upon the strong platform that is currently in place, but ensure that key growth opportunities are seized. Recent progress includes:

- a) **Sector Development (Offshore Renewable Energy):** In June we hosted an event with Dong Energy on the offshore wind opportunities coming from the Burbo Bank wind farm extension. Over 150 businesses attended. We followed this on the 17<sup>th</sup> September with a further event targeted at those companies looking to access contracts and 47 companies attended. Local businesses already working with Dong or their suppliers spoke and gave a real insight into their work. Initial feedback from the event is that it has led to a number of businesses securing contracts with a range of suppliers.
- b) **The A 41 Corridor (supplier parks):** This is a key strategic corridor for the borough, incorporating a number of industrial and business sites and offering further growth potential. Funding secured by the Council from the Government's Regional Growth Fund has supported the development of two new business parks that are being targeted to supply chain businesses operating in the offshore and renewable sectors. These business parks are currently under construction and will together create up to 285 jobs and 120,000 sq ft of new business floorspace.

c) **Pacific Road** - On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, Wirral Chamber of Commerce launched its latest small business centre. Pacific Road will be the chamber's third business centre and will offer 16,000 sq ft of office accommodation which will provide much needed small business space. Wirral is recognised for having a dynamic and growing SME business economy and this fantastic project is part of a plan for supporting further growth and investment in Wirral.

d) **Wirral Waters:**

- **Maritime Knowledge Hub (Project Launch):** The Liverpool City Region has one of the largest clusters of maritime business in Europe - generating £2.6bn of the region's GVA. Working with Mersey Maritime, Liverpool John Moores University and the Peel Group, we have recognised that there is now an opportunity to develop the market still further to increase innovation, generate and share knowledge within the sector and increase skills. This will be done through creating a Maritime Knowledge Hub based within the Enterprise Zone which will bring together a range of activities including maritime simulators, offshore survival training, a maritime manufacturing technology centre and business support. We were delighted that the project was able to be launched at an event held as part of London Shipping week.
- **Tower Wharf:** Work is nearing completion on the £11.7m Tower Wharf Grade 'A' office building. The project has created 48,000sq.ft of premium office space and represents the first commercial building to be completed within the Wirral Waters EZ. On completion the building will be occupied by the Contact Company who estimate that it will create up to 745 new jobs for the Borough.
- **Wirral Metropolitan College:** The College's new campus opened to students in early September. The Built Environment, Skills and Enterprise Centre will provide the skills and knowledge needed to support the developments that will take place within Wirral Waters and across the Borough.

e) **Development Proposals:**

- **Hoylake Golf Resort:** We have announced the Jack Nicklaus JV Group as the Council's preferred Development Partner. The £145m scheme has now moved into the detailed design stage which will see plans drawn up for the golf complex incorporating a 4\* Marriot Hotel, associated leisure and spa facilities, a Jack Nicklaus designed golf course and a re-provided Hoylake Municipal Course with associated enabling development. Once completed the project will have the potential to create 130 direct jobs and dramatically increase visitor numbers to Wirral. We will also be facilitating public consultation events in Hoylake and West Kirby before Christmas 2015 to give people an opportunity to comment on the outline proposals.

- **Birkenhead Town Centre:** Following agreement by Cabinet to the principles of the masterplan for the town centre, the Council has been working with the Developer (Neptune Developments) and other landowners in the town centre and progress is being made on all aspects of this complex and commercial project with the aim of bringing everything together for decisions later this year.
  - **Birkenhead BID:** Led by Wirral Chamber of Commerce, a campaign launch event took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, outlining plans to improve the commercial and retail areas. Local businesses are being given the opportunity to vote in support of the BID via an election to be held in November. The outcome of the vote will be announced in December and if successful the BID will be in place for a period of five years and is expected to raise more than £2m, which will be invested in delivering a safer and cleaner town centre, improving access and amenities and on promoting events to attract increased footfall into Birkenhead.
- f) **International Development:** Representatives from Wirral's business community have returned from China, having created new business links and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Taicang General Chamber of Commerce, based in one of China's most competitive cities. The delegation met with Chinese government officials and businesses supported by UKTI and members of the China-Britain Business Council, the leading organisation helping UK companies to grow and develop business in China. It was also confirmed that a Chinese delegation will be visiting Wirral in November, and a return trade mission will also be organised by Wirral Chamber of Commerce during 2016 for local businesses to visit China.

Wirral's growing links with international markets have taken another step forward following a recent visit to Reno, where I met with senior officials from the Governor of Nevada's office and signed a Twin City Partnership agreement between Wirral and Reno. We have an ambition to grow our clean energy manufacturing sector and Reno is home to 13 geo-thermal companies and a number of advanced clean energy manufacturers. Earlier this year, Reno gained international recognition when electric car company Tesla Motors announced plans for a \$5bn factory in the area and was recently cited by the Kauffman Foundation as the U.S.'s "most consistent standout" for start-ups, with an emerging concentration of aviation, research-and-development, and high-tech industries.

## 5. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The Council has invited the LGA to return to Wirral to conduct a Financial Review and Corporate Peer Challenge during October and November 2015. It is over three years since the Council first participated in a Corporate Peer Challenge in October 2012, with a follow up visit in May 2013. My view is that the Council benefitted greatly from the previous findings and recommendations provided by the Peer Team, and I welcome the opportunity to participate once again in this free offer from the LGA to provide external challenge and expert opinion on our future plans.

The areas that the Peer Team will focus on include understanding the local context and priorities, financial planning, leadership and governance and our capacity to deliver organisationally. The Wirral Plan and the arrangements to deliver the 20 pledges will provide a clear focus for the team and their findings and recommendations will provide the basis to ensure our plans and arrangements are sound to deliver the changes that we must make. I believe Wirral Council is a very different organisation from when the Peer Team visited three years ago and I look forward to providing further details on their visits as they become available.

## **6. EXTERNAL AUDIT FINDINGS**

Grant Thornton, our External Auditor completed their review of the council's financial statements for 2014/15. In their latest report, Grant Thornton highlighted that the progress the Council has made, has been formally recognised by an award for 'Most Improved Council' from the Local Government Chronicle. The report additionally notes the progress already made in the Wirral Plan, which is now providing a Wirral-wide blueprint for partners' to work together and deliver services differently. The report was particularly positive and highlighted the council's effective arrangements for delivering value for money and achieving good financial performance.

## **7. NEW CABINET ARRANGEMENTS**

The Wirral Plan provides an ambitious set of pledges to be achieved by 2020 and as a result I will be reviewing the responsibilities of my Cabinet portfolios to ensure they are fit for purpose and fully reflect the priorities set out in the Wirral Plan. I look forward to outlining these changes to you when I have completed my review.