

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

A key Pledge within the Wirral Plan is to ensure good quality housing for residents. I am therefore pleased to report that during the first quarter of 2015/16, 194 affordable housing units in Wirral were completed and we are on track to exceed this year's overall target of 250 affordable housing units completed.

2. ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy Projects Plus completed their 12 month Council contract in August for the Fuel Poverty & Energy Efficiency awareness programme. As part of the programme 741 residents were provided advice and 221 referrals were made for assistance ranging from heating grants, loft insulation grants and the Collective Energy Switch, providing residents living in our most economically deprived areas much needed support in reducing energy bills and fighting fuel poverty.

A tender for the 2015-18 contract has recently been concluded with Energy Projects Plus winning with the most economically advantageous tender.

3. SELECTIVE LICENSING

A further demonstration of our commitment to our Pledge of good quality housing can be seen through the success of the Council's Selective Licensing Scheme, which has now been fully operational in 4 areas within Tranmere, Birkenhead and Wallasey since 1st July 2015. The team are now in place and starting to go out and radically improve the quality of private rented property and the standard of management of properties in these areas.

To date, private landlords in these areas have applied for a license for almost 400 properties; estimated at being almost half the private rented stock in these areas. Almost 500 landlords have applied to get their properties accredited with the Council's property accreditation scheme which means that these properties will be brought up to an acceptable standard prior to them being licensed. Therefore Selective Licensing is already making a significant impact on improving the quality of private rented properties in these areas.

An OJEU tender process to select delivery partners for energy efficiency and fuel poverty awareness and solid wall insulation grants for the Selective Licensing areas is nearing completion. Contracts are due to be in place by the end of October 2015.

4. HOUSING REGENERATION IN BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE

Following the confirmation of a Compulsory Purchase Order, the final privately owned houses were transferred to Council ownership and have now been demolished. The remaining site within the St James Gate redevelopment scheme has been handed over to Keepmoat and is currently being redeveloped. Keepmoat has advised that property sales are strong with some plots being sold 'off plan' in advance of the houses being built. Keepmoat are currently developing plans for their next phase of development on Station & Tyrer Streets close to Birkenhead North Station. These plans also include the redevelopment of a cleared site on Shannon Street, Birkenhead and at the time of writing it is anticipated that Keepmoat will be on site towards the end of the year.

In Tranmere, the final block of houses/former retail units on Church Road has now been demolished. The proposed redevelopment now has planning permission and Lovell are aiming to start phase 1 of the housing redevelopment before Christmas.

5. DOMESTIC ABUSE BID

In the July Budget a £3 million fund for 2015 to 2016 was announced to address any gaps in the provision of specialist accommodation-based support, and provide support for victims seeking to access these services. In late August 2015, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced the opening of this fund and invited bids from Local Authorities in partnership with relevant local services, to be submitted by the 1st October.

Officers from the Supported Housing Team and Family Safety Unit are currently working in partnership with Wirral Women and Children's Aid (WWACA – Refuge for women fleeing domestic abuse) to construct a bid, to support us as we work towards achieving our pledge of demonstrating zero tolerance to domestic violence. Members will be informed of the outcome in due course.

6. MAINSTAY – SUPPORTED HOUSING GATEWAY

The previous portfolio summary report advised members of the implementation of 'MainStay', a pan-Merseyside 'virtual' single point of access to supported housing services for vulnerable, homeless people, funded by DCLG.

During the month of August, MainStay reported the following outcomes:

- 85 people were accommodated in local supported housing services.
- 49 single homeless people were supported to secure their own, independent, accommodation.
- 34 vulnerable people began receiving a package of floating support to enable them to remain independent in their own home.