

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Pat Hackett
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Regeneration and Planning
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. SKILLS

Officers from Wirral's Investment Strategy Team have been working on the development of a Liverpool City Region Combined Authority bid for European Social Fund (ESF). This is in response to the 'Inclusive Labour Markets' call for commissioned projects to support adults and young people into employment as published by the Department for Work and Pensions as Managing Authority for these funds. An outline submission was submitted on 22nd May and the Combined Authority has subsequently been invited to submit a full application by 2nd October 2015. This is a competitive bidding process and as such details of the bid are commercial in confidence at this stage.

2. SMALL BUSINESS

Work continues on the roll out of Action Plans across the borough's 23 retail areas. In 2014/15 a further 6 will be completed and the current status is as follows:

- West Kirby – completed
- Upton Village – completed
- Eastham – completed
- Laird Street – completed
- Lower Bebington – Inaugural workshop set for 9th September, anticipated completion by end of October 2015.
- Oxtun Village – Workshop scheduled for November 2015, plan completed by end of December 2015.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE

- a.) **Hamilton Square** - The £1.1m project will facilitate improved accessibility and traffic movements within Hamilton Square including the re-opening of Hamilton Street outside Birkenhead Town Hall. Mott MacDonald has been commissioned to

design up the scheme which will be consulted upon prior to its implementation. Subject to securing its approvals the project will be tendered in December 2015 with a view to the works being completed in March 2016.

- b.) **BDUK** - The Merseyside Connected superfast broadband programme is now in the last phase of roll out delivery and is on course to be completed in June 2016. This is a circa £15m investment that in Wirral has already delivered 88 (78.6%) new superfast broadband street cabinets linked by a network of new connections across the Borough. This represents the second highest investment in Merseyside and contrasts strongly with St Helens which only has 30 live cabinets and is only 50.8% complete. As an illustration of this investment each cabinet costs around £20,000 to install, power and commission. As of July 2015, the total number of homes past (THP) in Wirral stood at 12,960 therefore the project is well on course to surpass the Government's national target of 95% of premises served by superfast broadband. In fact across Wirral and Merseyside the figure is expected to be in the region of 98% to 99%.

The Business Support element of the programme has been successfully completed, delivering and in some cases surpassing all of the contracted targets. It has delivered;

- 500 Business Engagements - 100% of target
- 316 Business Assist – 105% of target
- 250 Business Improvements (GVA) – 100% of target
- 151 New Jobs – 101% target

Broadband Voucher Scheme is a related support measure to help businesses pay for new superfast broadband connections. A grant of up to £3,000 is available per business and to date a total of 102 Wirral based companies have been allocated grants to the value of £58,000.

4. INVESTMENT

Cabinet at its meeting on 10 September 2015 (Minute 48 refers) approved the setting up of a register of Brownfield Land suitable for residential development, and, where appropriate, agreed that Local Development Orders should be drawn up. These Local Development Orders will be drawn up in draft form by the Head of Regeneration and Planning and then discussed with ward members as well as undergoing statutory consultation. The draft Order and the consultation responses will then be reported to Planning Committee who will be responsible for adopting the Order or not.

5. RETAIL

Work is nearing completion on a new retail offer at Junction 1 of the M53. The development will deliver 23,000 square feet of new retail floor space at a cost of £7m. The fit out cost by tenants is estimated at around £5m. The total investment of £12m will create an estimated 359 new jobs (a mix of full-time and part time). Confirmed tenants including Marks and Spencer Simply Food, Aldi, Pets at Home and Home Bargains.

This is alongside significant new retail investment at Croft Retail Park in Bromborough worth in total over £8.3m which has created/safeguarded 297 jobs. This includes investments by Costa, KFC, Subway, Dunelm, JD Sports, The Range, Greggs, Harvester, Nandos and Mothercare.

6. PLANNING

- a.) **Devonshire Park Neighbourhood Plan Referendum** - The local referendum will take place on 22 October 2015. If a majority of the people who vote in the referendum, vote to approve the Plan, the Council will be required to formally adopt it by resolution at Full Council.
- b.) **Land at Oxton Road/Balls Road Birkenhead** - Lidl have submitted a planning application for a new food store on derelict land at the junction of Oxton Road and Balls Road in Birkenhead. If planning permission is granted then this will represent an investment of £5m and will create 40 jobs.
- c.) **Port Sunlight Local Listed Building Consent Order – Consultation** Planning Committee at its meeting on 17 September 2015 (Agenda Item 16) approved consultation on the Local Listed Building Consent Order for residential houses that are grade 2 listed in Port Sunlight Village Conservation Area. Consultation started on 21 September 2015 and will finish on 25 October 2015. This is a partnership Initiative with the Port Sunlight Trust and Historic England. The Order when made will give consent for the replacement of rear doors, rear yard gates and rear windows without the need for listed building consent. This will be helpful to residents who will then not need to apply for consent as long as the works proposed are within the scope of the Order.
- d.) **Local Development Framework** - The Council is still waiting for the Government to release information on housing requirements which will then enable housing numbers for the Borough to be calculated. It is anticipated that this information will be received from Government in October/November 2015.

7. PARTNERSHIPS - MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE (MDA)

Significant progress has been made in this vital partnership agenda to champion cross border transport issues. For Wirral, enabling access for its residents to job opportunities in North East Wales is a key priority. Meetings with the Welsh Assembly Government, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and also with Whitehall Officials have all taken place to put forward a strategic business case for the electrification of the Wrexham to Bidston (Borderlands) rail link.

The power of this partnership work has recently been demonstrated by a visit by the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns MP, who has pledged support for the MDA priorities. The Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, James Wharton MP attended a meeting with MDA partners in August which further raised the priorities and the valuable work undertaken by the partners.