

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Adrian Jones
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Central and Support Services
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Joe Blott, Strategic Director- Transformation and Resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. ASSET MANAGEMENT

A number of major asset disposals are underway and making good progress, including:

- Acre Lane: demolition is due to commence in October, the monitoring of bats will continue during the demolition and the progress will be dependent on their presence. Legal documents have been prepared to offer Morris Homes an exclusivity period to undertake intensive surveys of the grounds and once completed a final offer will be made.
- Manor Drive: we have received a good response following the marketing exercise and offers have been submitted in the region of £6/7m.
- Secretary of State Submissions: a number of submissions are required including Rock Ferry High, Foxfield and Pensby Park, which will be completed in the next few weeks. Marketing will then take place of these sites which will result in significant Capital receipts.

We have also made significant progress on our capital projects, including:

- West Kirby Concourse: a new 90 station fitness suite opened in June which has resulted in the actual income surpassing target. There are over 2500 Invigor8 members associated with West Kirby Concourse. Two new aerobics studios and a new catering facility will also be open within the next few weeks and will attract further new customers to the Invigor8 product.
- Wallasey Town Hall: the latest phase of internal refurbishments has been completed on the ground floor and the 2nd floor. All staff have been relocated into the Town Hall that were located in the South Annex (which is now empty and awaiting asbestos strip).
- School Summer Projects: a large summer programme was completed successfully by project officers. Larger schemes due for completion in the next week include Fender Primary and Elleray Park.

Intensive work has been undertaken by Asset Technical Officers to implement a new Asset Management System; the Helpdesk facility will be rolled out in the next few weeks and will enhance the workflow of day to day repairs, payments and bring significant improvements to schools and other premises. Other modules will be come on-line on a priority basis. For the first time all asset data will be brought together in one system. Demonstration of the system to the Portfolio Holder is planned shortly

2. HEALTH, SAFETY & RESILIENCE

The emergency planning and Health and Safety Team were heavily involved in the coordination and response to the Severe Flood Event of the 2nd September. It would appear approximately 100 properties (business and residential) experienced some internal flooding. This has led to a number of families (primarily from the Moreton Area) remaining displaced in temporary accommodation, until their properties are habitable again.

The Head of Corporate & Community Safety has begun a Significant Flooding Event Investigation, as required under Section 19 of the Flood & Water Management Act. Understandably this investigation is likely to take some time to complete and as a part of that investigation, we have already held a multi-agency de-brief meeting and a community drop-in event in the Moreton area. This was a particularly difficult event for all agencies, as residents who had either directly experienced flooding, or those who were concerned about the proximity of the flooding to their houses/businesses, came in to speak to representatives and express their anger about why the flooding occurred.

The section 19 investigation will determine the specific causes of the flooding, but it is likely to be a case that the volume of rain that fell over such a short period of time simply overcame the existing drainage infrastructure and overtopped the main watercourses. Early indications have identified that 80% of September's average rainfall fell over the 1st and 2nd of September.

3. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

On 6 October the Council website, wirral.gov.uk, will be re-launched with a new, mobile-friendly, easier to navigate and use design. The Council website receives in the region of 3 million visits every year – around 58,000 per week – and increasingly these visits are coming from mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets such as iPads. These devices currently account for 58% of all traffic to the Council website.

The new Council site will be completely 'mobile-responsive', which means it will detect what kind of device the resident is using to access our website, and automatically redesign itself to the best possible layout to suit that device, no matter if it is a smart phone, laptop, desktop PC or tablet.

Almost every page of content on the current Council website, more than 2,000 pages, has been reviewed, re-written and made easier to use and understand. This has led to the total number of pages being reduced from over 2000 to around 1000; providing the same information but presented in a much more efficient, easier to understand way. The overall structure of the site has also been completely redesigned, based on national best practice and local data showing how people currently use the website.

Extensive user testing has been undertaken, with over 800 residents taking part and contributing to improvements in the new design and layout. We will continue to conduct this user testing and ensure the site is constantly monitored to take account developing technologies, changes in usage trends and what residents tell us.

Work is underway regarding the migration of email from the current solution to the future Office365 system. IT services are working in partnership with BT to implement a highly resilient Wide Area Network. Work is progressing with upgrades to selected Children's Centres and other key links.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES/ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Remodelling and change: The remodelling work is in its final stages of delivery. We continue to work hard to redeploy employees who are displaced by organisational change. Work also continues to support transfer of staff to new Local Authority Companies to deliver day services and schools traded services.

HR Policy Development: A revised disciplinary policy was agreed by Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee in July. The Committee will consider a report proposing changes to Council's attendance management policy on 21 September 2015.