

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Pat Hackett
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Business and Tourism
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive

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 GROWTH PLAN

Significant progress has been made over the last two months in developing the Wirral Growth Plan, the strategy that sets out a defining vision for Growth within Wirral over the next 20 years.

The Growth Plan will develop far more integration between seven key action areas in order to achieve better outcomes for Wirral. The seven action areas include: Business Growth; Inward Investment; Tourism; Transport, Employment, Skills and Housing Growth.

It is essential that Wirral has a robust strategy for generating growth in order to deliver the outcomes set out in the Wirral Plan. Progress has also been made in the following areas:

2. INCREASE INWARD INVESTMENT

Drop-in sessions to share the initial concept drawings for the Hoylake Golf resort were held between 11 and 13 November in Melrose Hall, Hoylake and between 18 to 20 November in Westbourne Hall, West Kirby. This was an opportunity for people to tell the Council what they thought about the proposals. Both events were very well attended and valuable feedback was received. The Council would like to thank everyone who came to these events to share their views. A full report on the consultation outcomes is being prepared and this will then be reported back to Members, the West Wirral Constituency Committee and will also be available to access via the Council's web site.

In November, Cabinet approved the creation of a new Investment Fund within the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone. This fund will utilise Government Policy to re-invest the Business Rate uplift generated by new development within the EZ into catalyst projects, speeding up development within both the East Float and West Float areas of Wirral Waters. A Place Shaping workshop took place in November including all

key stakeholders to revisit the master plan based on current projects. This is an extremely exciting time for this project.

3. THRIVING SMALL BUSINESS

I gave an update on this work to Council on 12 October 2015. Since then this work has been progressing well. I would like to highlight the importance of the Christmas period to our local retail centres and note the number of events and the important work being done by traders, residents and our Constituency Committees in support of this. One such example is the very successful event which took place in Liscard Town Centre on 14 November organized by the “Light Up Liscard” community project.

4. VIBRANT TOURISM ECONOMY

Wirral has the fastest growing visitor economy in the Liverpool City Region and the sector was valued at over £355 million in 2014; employing 4,800 full time equivalent jobs; attracting 7.5 million visitors and increased by 8.4% from the previous year.

It has also grown by over 40% since 2009, adding £103 million to Wirral’s local economy. This sustained growth has resulted in a 20% increase in jobs within the sector and visitors to the borough have risen by 14% during the same period. A piece of research has recently been commissioned that will help partners to further understand the motivations and perceptions of existing and potential visitors, the evaluation of current marketing and will explore the potential for the investment into new major tourism projects in our borough.

5. PLANNING MATTERS

A number of important planning matters have been successfully dealt within over the last two months. These include:

- Land at the top of Oxton Road/ Balls Road, Birkenhead: The Council has now given planning permission for a new Lidl store to be built on this prominent vacant site at the gateway to Birkenhead Town Centre and Oxton. Construction is expected to start in early 2016.
- The Wirral Conservation Areas Forum has re-named itself to Conservation Areas Wirral and they have recently produced, with the Council’s support, a very useful guide to Living in a Conservation Area. More information on their valuable work can be viewed at www.CAWIRRAL.org.uk
- Port Sunlight Local listed Building Consent Order: Planning Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2015 will be asked, following the completion of consultation, to adopt this Order for a period of ten years which will help to simplify the processes for permission where works fall within the scope of the Order.
- Brownfield Land Register: following agreement of Cabinet to set up this Register in September 2015, preparatory work is now underway to commence discussions with ward members in early 2016 about specific sites in their wards. The Council will also need to consider the recently published

Planning and Housing Bill which is likely to bring in further changes to the planning system.

6. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

The latest Neighbourhood Forum, for **Birkenhead and Tranmere**, was designated by Cabinet on 5 November 2015 (Minute 70 refers). The relevant legal notifications have been sent to the Forum and to other stakeholders, including the statutory consultees. The Forum will then be able to begin formally consulting the local community on what should be contained within a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the designated area. Any final proposals, on which the local community must be consulted (and will eventually have to pass a local referendum before they can be allowed to come into force), must first pass a series of statutory tests.

After the successful vote of local residents in the local referendum on 22 October 2015 (92% of the 301 people who voted (a 31% turnout), voted in favour of using the plan to determine planning applications within the area), the Neighbourhood Development Plan for **Devonshire Park** will be recommended for adoption by Council on 14 December 2015. The Plan is the first Neighbourhood Plan prepared by the local community to be adopted in Wirral.

The **Hoyle** Community Planning Forum (Hoyle Vision) submitted their proposed Neighbourhood Plan to the Council in September, following public consultation in January 2015. Following the Delegated Decision published on 26 October 2015, their proposals were published by the Council for public comment on 9 November 2015, to allow an independent examination to take place in early 2016. The deadline for comments to be submitted to the Council is 5pm on 22 December 2015. The plan and the comments received will then be considered by an independent examiner, to be appointed by the Council with the agreement of the Forum.