

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Adrian Jones
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Resources: Finance, Assets and Technology
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. TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The new Council website has been live since 6 October; the site continues to perform well and is an improved method for residents to access services, information and advice.

A major project to update the operating systems on all of the Council's Windows Servers is underway; the council currently has nearly 600 servers enabling the delivery of approximately 300 services. Server and client device patching is ongoing and external security tests will take place in mid-December, in preparation for the Council's PSN submission in February.

The Information Governance team is currently working with Colleagues in Health and Social Care to review and agree information sharing arrangements which could significantly improve outcomes for patients and help to reduce the cost of health care.

The council is also now close to reaching agreement with a local public sector partner to share data centre space. If we can reach agreement, it will remove a significant corporate risk. We continue to work with colleagues in the Council to identify a suitable location for the second data centre to enhance the resilience of the ICT Estate.

The Council provides facilities to members and officers to allow them to work remotely while safeguarding the sensitive information that is entrusted to the Council's care. It does have limitations, but the system works and is secure.

Many public hotspots redirect web traffic to a 'captive portal' web page at first connection. The user then has to input some information before they can connect to the internet. While some 'free' public WiFi services are safe to use, many have no security and are open to attacks from cyber criminals. There is no simple way for us to differentiate between the good and the bad free services.

It is this risk that has prompted CESG (the Information Security arm of GCHQ) to caution public sector IT departments against allowing captive portal connections. This is inconvenient; however, the Council provides remote workers and members with the ability to connect securely to the Council's systems from most locations.

As has been stated previously, the IT Service is looking for a cost effective solution that will allow use of these free facilities while mitigating the risks so long as the solution is secure, meets the needs of the Council and delivers both financial and business benefits to the Council.

2. ASSETS AND BUILDINGS ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE

Our programme to ensure we make the best possible use of our assets across all public sector partners in Wirral continues, with updates available on a number of developments:

- Acre Lane: demolition of the building is underway with anticipated completion during February 2016. The exclusivity period for the preferred developer Morris Homes to undertake their surveys and to present their final offer commenced on 16 November. Their final offer will be known by March 2016 and a report to Cabinet will follow.
- Manor Drive: bids have been received for this site with David Wilson Homes being the preferred developer. Heads of terms are being drawn up to enter an exclusivity period for site, to enable investigations to be carried out and a final offer to be made.
- Secretary of State submissions have been made for 3 former school sites, Foxfield School in Moreton, Pensby Park Primary and Rock Ferry High. Further financial information is required and this is being progressed.

A number of other major developments are ongoing, including:

- Negotiations are ongoing with Neptune Developments for the sale of three sites at Europa Boulevard to provide a replacement swimming pool and fitness suite, Budget Hotel, Food court and Fast Food Drive-through. Allied to this as Phase 2 will be the grant of an intermediate lease of Birkenhead Market to Neptune to safeguard its continued operation, with a view to the eventual grant of a restructured lease to facilitate the development of a smaller market which will, in turn, release land for the re-configuration of The Grange.
- The proposal to establish the Isle of Mann University ICT Faculty in Birkenhead is still being worked on. This will utilise the Conway Building and Municipal Building in Cleveland Street. Proposed Heads of Term have been prepared in anticipation of confirmation from the University that funding is in place.
- Negotiations for the disposal of land at Pye Road, Heswall, to Waitrose are still active in conjunction with the Council's property consultants, Lambert Smith Hampton.
- Public Consultation is presently being undertaken in respect of the Hoylake Golf Resort. Should this proceed, the Council will contribute a large proportion of the land holding required by way of a Development Agreement, and new Municipal Course will be created.

Other activities include:

- A new system for school asset data has been activated. Training and system testing is going well. This is particularly important for future Service Level Agreements with schools which brings in a significant income of £400,000.
- Support from the Local Government Association is being secured to assist the Council with key office and area reviews and also to establish a wider Wirral partnership asset group. This exercise will help deliver savings and target service delivery in line with the pledge promises.
- Edsential and Wirral Evolutions leases are being worked up to permit the re-designated use of premises for these new businesses.
- Good progress is being made on Bedford Drive Primary, and the new school is planned to open in September 2016. The schools Capital Programme is progressing well and will be quickened by the appointment of framework architectural and other technical services to support officers in delivering larger projects, particularly in meeting additional pupil places.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Two key policy areas have been updated; Attendance Management & Discipline and Dignity at Work (including Grievance and Whistleblowing). Mandatory training for all managers has been scheduled with a good attendance so far.

4. TRANSACTION CENTRE

A wide range of activity is currently underway as part of the further development of the Transaction Centre model. Key areas of focus within the centre include training of new and existing staff, the commencement of a full end-to-end process review across the services and work on a plan to further improve the collection of Council Tax.

Across all services, there is work ongoing to review performance measurements available and in use, and to ensure that data is being collected to accurately reflect volumes, processing times and quality.

We are 4th best at collecting revenue benchmarked against our relevant comparators. We benchmark ourselves consistently in order to learn from others and therefore improve our collection rates.