

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

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| REPORT OF | Councillor Christine Meaden |
| CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR | Leisure & Culture / Parks & Open Spaces |
| CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER | Clare Fish – Strategic Director – Families & Wellbeing |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. LIBRARIES

Income Generation

We are currently reviewing our library fees and charges 2015/16 with a view to an increase in all areas. Birkenhead reference Library has started raising income through selling postcards that promote classical engravings from our antiquarian collection. This is also being promoted through Facebook and Twitter.

We have applied to the Carnegie Trust to send an individual member of Wirral staff to work with them as Carnegie partners for eighteen months. This will offer the successful applicant project funding, an online learning programme, mentoring and evaluation and will support them in developing innovative projects for the library service.

Currently liaising with Wirral Met College and local schools to take in a series of work placements throughout the winter.

The library management team have been invited to join the nation cluster working party arising from the Taskforce for libraries group set up in Liverpool. This is a key group and we will be able to feedback on national and local developments

The Universal Learning Offer and Reading Ahead now successfully launched alongside a recent visit to the Central library by Andy McNab. Over 50 people attended this event to promote library literacy and partnerships.

Volunteers - Pensby volunteers have now started to open Pensby library or provide Library Express service 9-1 on Monday mornings in addition to the 9-5 offered on Thursdays.

Irby Friends now open the Library 2-5pm on Tuesday afternoons to offer a Library Express service. We are in the process of organising a rota of volunteers and local organisations to help maintain public access to collections

On 22nd October Wirral Libraries had a high profile government visit from Kathy Settle (Chief Executive of the Leadership for libraries Taskforce) and Anna Wadsworth (Library Secretariat, Department of Culture Media and Sport). The Library Taskforce was formed to ensure that the recommendations were implemented from the Sieghart Independent Panel Review into Public Libraries (2014). To this end Kathy Settle explained she was scheduling visits every fortnight to libraries throughout the country. Her visit to Wirral started at Birkenhead Central Library where she was given background to the service meeting. A working lunch was held at West Kirby Library/One Stop Shop before visits to St James and Rock Ferry libraries in the afternoon. She was impressed by our range of co-location and partnerships already in place and the diversity of activities taking place. She stated that there is no single model for library service delivery but that services should be designed around the needs of the local community.

2. PARKS & OPEN SPACES

Allotments Strategy

I would like to thank the allotments community for their input into the production of the recently approved allotments strategy.

Fireworks Night

The borough fireworks displays on the 5 November, one of the wettest nights in November, went well although the rain tried its best to dampen proceedings.

Birkenhead Park

The door damaged at the visitor centre when thieves tried to break in has been replaced and added security measures are in place. Joint working with the police, community patrol and Birkenhead Park's staff has led to the arrest of a motorbike thief.

3. CULTURE

Floral Pavilion

The Floral is coming up to the busiest time of the year with its range of Christmas galas, its Christmas party nights and very popular pantomime. 21,500 tickets for events in December have already been sold and this excludes other events and conferences which are also scheduled to take place in the building. The programme

for January to May 2016 provides an exciting new season for Wirral residents and visitors to the venue.

Williamson

Summer art workshops run by the Williamson Art Gallery with support from Wirral Methodist Housing Association & the Friends of the Williamson attracted a wide range of children who have never been involved before, including a significant number from targeted vulnerable groups of looked-after children and young carers whose involvement in art workshops is showing a distinct benefit to their lives.

The Museums at Night event on 30th October and the three-week 'Starkers' installation by Davy & Kristin McGuire has been a popular and critical success, using innovative technology to bring a marble sculpture from the Williamson's collection to life. This was supported by Culture 24 following the Williamson's success in a popular vote to 'win' the artists' involvement.

Birkenhead Priory has been taken off the 'Heritage at Risk' list and is drawing increasing numbers of school and lay visitors.

Culture Strategy

Work is progressing on a Culture Strategy for Wirral in line with the pledge set out in the Wirral Plan. It seeks to provide cultural activities for all and focuses on the offer from Wirral's communities as well as looking at opportunities for partnership with the Liverpool City Region. I will bring further information on this work as it becomes available.

Heritage Matters

The Friends of Birkenhead Park are progressing the development of a bid for World Heritage Status for the park and the Friends of Flaybrick are looking for funding support from the Council and Historic England to progress their plans for the cemetery and former chapel buildings.

The 27th International Guitar Festival of Great Britain

This took place in Wirral during November and featured some of the finest guitarists and bands currently playing. The event was well received.

4. LEISURE

Capital Projects in Leisure Centres

The new Fitness Suites at Guinea Gap and West Kirby Concourse opened in March and June this year and Invigor8 memberships at Guinea Gap have risen from 676 members in January 15, to 1586 members in October 15 (an increase of 910 members) and at West Kirby Concourse, there has been an increase from 1970 in Jan 15 to 2977 in Oct 15 (an increase of over 1000). Both Centres have exceeded the targets set, with additional income now being achieved.

West Kirby Marine Lake

The plans for the new development at West Kirby Marine Lake are now available on line to view. It is hoped that the building works will start in January 2016, with the Sailing School and Centre remaining open for general public use throughout the contract term.