

COUNCIL

11 JULY 2016

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor George Davies
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Housing & Community Safety
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. ONE WIRRAL PUBLIC ESTATE

The Wirral Asset Strategy is helping to drive a new approach towards creating 'one public estate', where all public sector partners work together to make the best, most cost effective and appropriate use of buildings. One of our first and most important steps is to create a group to guide and oversee this work, helping to focus on collaboration with partners, exploring opportunities for co-location and making sure residents benefit from more joined-up and accessible public services.

2. ENABLING NEW HOUSING SUPPLY

The Council has continued towards its pledge of ensuring 3,500 new homes are built by 2020, and ensuring good quality housing which meets the needs of residents. We've provided direct grant assistance in the provision of affordable rented homes and work has begun on new developments at the Old Court House in Wallasey, Church Road in Tranmere and at the old United Reformed Church site, also in Tranmere. Magenta Living has commenced work on the site of the old Melrose and Thornridge Heights in Moreton. In total, these developments will provide 91 new homes for affordable rent.

In terms of new developments for market housing, work has recently commenced at Ingleborough Road, Prenton and completion is nearing at Bridle Road, Eastham. Persimmon Homes are undertaking preparatory works at Pool Lane, Bromborough and Bellway Homes are also carrying out preparatory works at the site of the former Port Sunlight Golf Driving Range on New Chester Road.

4. SELECTIVE LICENSING

The Council commenced its Selective Licensing Scheme in 4 small areas within Tranmere, Birkenhead and Wallasey on 1st July 2015 aimed at radically improving

the quality of private rented property and the standard of management of properties in these areas.

The scheme will improve the standards of the private rented sector, and will also look to improve the whole of the Selective Licensing neighbourhoods through targeted interventions such as empty property grants and cosy-homes heating grants. Any landlord who owns a property within the Selective Licensing area must apply for a licence to be able to rent their property.

To date, nearly 1,300 part one applications and 1,259 part two applications have been submitted to the Council by or on behalf of landlords. A total of 1,156 licences have been issued. The numbers of privately rented properties within the areas are higher than those originally envisaged at the implementation stage.

There are currently 44 properties which have been identified by Officers which require licences and where the landlord has not made an application. These are currently being investigated further by Officers to be addressed.

A range of services are also being targeted within the Selective Licensing area to help support both tenants and landlords in meeting their obligations ranging from tenancy support, healthy homes visits, anti-social behaviour advice, energy efficiency advice and access to grants for improving thermal efficiency. The scheme is already proving a great success, with highlights including:

- 267 home visits undertaken, generating 620 referrals for further assistance to be provided i.e. welfare benefits, aids and adaptation.
- 165 Health related interventions, 123 mini health checks provided (blood pressure, BMI, and weight) with over 1/5th of people subsequently identified as having high blood pressure and being at risk
- 128 targeted private sector surveys completed and over 300 category 1 and 2 hazards identified in properties
- 481 new properties meet property accreditation
- 149 households benefitting from advice and assistance to reduce fuel poverty and enable warmer homes.

Work is ongoing with teams across the Council and external agencies including Street-scene, Anti-social behaviour team and Environmental Health to ensure that landlords and tenants are aware of their obligations and to give them skills so that they are better able to manage tenants.

5. HOUSING REGENERATION IN BIRKENHEAD

Work is ongoing to redevelop the Milner Street and St James Gate sites in Birkenhead, with 194 homes delivered so far. Plans are being finalised now for the next phase of this development, around Shannon, Station and Tyler Streets near Birkenhead North Train Station. This phase of the development could provide a further 54 housing units, with a consultation event planned for the local community during the summer.