

**CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT**

<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>Councillor Ann McLachlan</b>
<b>CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR</b>	<b>Transformation, Leisure &amp; Culture</b>
<b>CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER</b>	<b>Clare Fish, Strategic Director Families and Wellbeing</b>

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**1.0 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

The Council's Transformation Programme continues to develop at pace. The programme will help the Council ensure the Pledges we committed to as part of the Wirral Plan are delivered, in a way which is affordable within our medium-term financial strategy and through a set of modern, fit for purpose services which meet residents' needs.

Recent developments from the programme include the creation of the 'Safer Wirral Unit'. Community safety, reducing anti-social behaviour and ensuring residents felt safe is a top priority for Wirral residents. The Council is working closely with colleagues from Merseyside Police to develop a fully integrated unit, where Council teams and their police counterparts can provide a more joined up, effective service to residents.

Also moving quickly is our approach to join up our adult care commissioning and some services with partners throughout the local NHS. Making sure we can continue to provide the highest possible quality care and support, while at the same time better joining up our services and getting best value is absolutely vital and I am delighted this programme is progressing so positively.

**2.0 LEISURE & CULTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

The Wirral Culture Strategy was adopted earlier this year and is already making an impact, with major events throughout the City Region in development, including the River of Light Firework display and the potential return of the Giants to Merseyside.

Events in the Floral Pavilion, the Williamson Art Gallery and Birkenhead Priory continue to be hugely popular with residents, with thousands of people enjoying a variety of activities throughout the summer. Later this year the Floral Pavilion will bring the first ever autism friendly performance to Wirral, in addition to the already established audio described and signed performances.

Hundreds of local people are now regularly volunteering at places such as the Floral Pavilion, Williamson and Priory and the Council is developing a new Volunteering Strategy to help provide support and encouragement for those residents looking to support their communities by becoming a volunteer.

Progress is also being made against the actions set out in the Wirral Leisure Strategy. The first phase of refurbishment at West Kirby Marine Lake is now complete and the remainder of the facilities will be improved over the coming months. The development and promotion of 'Footgolf' has gone very well over the summer months, particularly at Arrowe Park and Kings Parade in New Brighton. We have attracted thousands of new customers to previously underused facilities, with the income at Arrowe Park and Kings Parade to date being 10 times what was usually received in the entire year.

The number of Wirral's parks, cemeteries and other open spaces awarded the Green Flag Award in 2016 has once again increased; making a total of 23 across the borough and the largest number in the North West. The sites gaining the award for the first time in 2016 are Hamilton Square Gardens, Dawstone Park, Harrison Park and Frankby Cemetery. I would like to congratulate the Friends Groups, many volunteers, organisations and members of staff involved in this very positive achievement. In addition, Wirral Country Park has recently gained the prestigious Natural England accreditation standard for Country Parks, which was established in 2009 to address concerns raised nationally about a number of challenges facing Country Parks.

I am very pleased to report significant progress is being made with the actions set out in Wirral's allotments partnership strategy for 2015 to 2020. Many allotment sites are now fully occupied for the first time in many years and the number of people waiting for an allotment has been reduced, however there is still a strong demand for plots as people are keen to take part in this environmentally beneficial and healthy activity.

The Forest School and Junior Rangers programmes, run by the Parks & Countryside team and partners, which encourages people to re-connect with nature and gain confidence and new skills, continues to be a huge success. Birkenhead Park's summer Junior Ranger event had more than 4000 visits during

the eight days programme. The autumn term of the school year has seen the number of students attending Forest School sessions increase to 75 each week.