

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Stuart Whittingham
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Transport & Infrastructure
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Smith, Strategic Commissioner- Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1. TRANSPORT AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The Connecting Wirral Transport Strategy Steering Group met for the second time in October. The group, which is comprised of all our key partners in transport, has continued to work well together to deliver the outcomes of this strategy.

In-year annual condition surveys of the borough's A, B and C roads have shown that Wirral has amongst the best quality roads compared to all other Councils in England. The benefits of an improved highway network are being experienced by residents, visitors and business passengers using our networks, alleviating traffic in order to move around the borough safely and efficiently.

I am very pleased to report that the number of road traffic collisions resulting in death or serious injury has improved against the corresponding period last year, and work is continuing with increased police resources allocated to support driver behaviour change. These additional enforcement activities, along with projects such as Public Health funded Mind Your Business are having a positive effect in making our roads safer for our communities. The Mind Your Business team have now engaged with over 250 Wirral businesses and have held numerous events to promote safer driving and vehicle safety.

I welcome the £340 million investment that has been identified in the Liverpool City Region's railways over the next 3 years which forms part of the Long Term Rail Strategy. As part of the investment, the rail track that runs around the Wirral loop line, and forms part of the connection between Wirral and Liverpool needs to be replaced in order to maintain long-term efficiency and reliability. This work is taking place between January and June 2017 over three phases with rail replacement buses being provided to support passengers. The needs of passengers with mobility issues and cyclists will be provided during the works and communication plans are in place to ensure all residents are informed and know how to undertake their journeys.

As well as working with our Liverpool City region partners to improve accessibility by rail and ensure that rail services support our economic growth, we are playing a key role in the Mersey Dee Alliance. The MDA comprises of stakeholders in Wirral, Cheshire West, Wrexham and Flintshire, and we have come together to develop Growth Track 360, a prospectus which calls for substantial investment in rail to enable growth in the cross-border

economy of the North Wales and Mersey Dee Region. Line speed improvements and increased service frequency on the line between Wrexham and Bidston have been identified as critical investments. To progress this, a working group met in October to start to investigate options to enhance the Borderlands line between Bidston and Wrexham, following approval from the Merseytravel Committee in July. It will be examining options including doubling service frequencies during the day time to two services per hour, line speed improvements and the possibility of new stations along the route or improvements to them.

Planning for the Docks Bridges replacement scheme continues and the works to replace the bridges are on schedule for overall completion by January 2018. Detailed design work has now commenced and in order to minimise the impact on road users, the road closure will be applied in early March 2017 following completion of the rail tunnel slab track renewal Phase 1. Stakeholder consultation has commenced and a comprehensive Council PR strategy for the bridges replacement is now being developed for implementation in January or February 2017.

I am pleased to report that the Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance is now operational. Arriva, Stagecoach and Merseytravel have signed an agreement that will deliver more than £25million worth of investment in bus services in year one of the five year partnership, not only for the benefit of existing passengers but in order to attract new users. The Liverpool City Region Bus Alliance will provide local people with improved, more efficient, joined-up and better value services. Operators will also sign up to clearly defined targets around punctuality and passenger satisfaction.

Cycling monitoring data is now available which shows an increase in cycling between 2014/15 and 2015/16 of 14%. This is great news for Wirral as residents will experience health and financial benefits as a result of increased cycling journeys. Public Health revenue-funded projects such as Business Travel Support and Travel Solutions actively encourage our residents to cycle to work and along with significant capital investment in our cycling infrastructure aim to enable people to cycle around the borough not only for leisure purposes but to access key destinations such as employment, education and town centres

The results of the annual independent National Highways Public Satisfaction Surveys were announced in October. Returns from Wirral residents had increased from 18% to 22%. Overall responses indicate that Wirral residents' satisfaction with transport and highway services remains above average compared to other English authorities, and I am really pleased that Wirral have been identified as one of the biggest improvers in Public Satisfaction in the Road Safety theme, specifically around the safety of cycling, and the safety of children cycling to school. This achievement has been recognised by the National Highways and Transport network and Wirral will receive an award for this at its annual conference later this month for being the only authority to have improved across all elements of the Road Safety theme.

Finally, we have recently held our annual Active Travel Forum workshop which focussed on the development of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the City Region for 2018-2028. The Active Travel Forum plays a key role in supporting healthy, active travel and at the event key stakeholders were invited to share their views to support the development of the plan.