

REPORT TITLE	<i>Update on Liverpool City Region developments</i>
REPORT OF	<i>Rose Boylan, Policy & Strategy Manager</i>

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out a brief overview of latest developments at the Liverpool City Region (LCR), including activity underway to implement the City Region devolution deal.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee is requested to note and comment on latest developments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

Committee have requested regular updates and consideration of City Region developments.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 N/a

3.0 LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

A wide range of ongoing activity continues to be delivered. Latest developments include:

3.1. LCR Mayoral Elections

The LCR Combined Authority Mayoral Election will be launched on 24th March, with the election to take place on 4th May 2017. Final details of the arrangements and process for the LCR Mayoral elections will shortly be published, and members will receive the latest update at the Business Overview & Scrutiny meeting.

The Combined Authority have agreed a budget allocation of £2.5m for the conduct of this election which is based upon the “maximum recoverable amounts” allocated to the various voting areas in respect of the Police and Crime Commissioner election and EU referendum held in 2016.

The local campaign to raise awareness of the Liverpool City Region Mayoral Elections commenced on Friday 10 March 2017. A communications toolkit has been sent to communications leads from the six local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Merseytravel to enable them to cascade messages via their internal and external channels. The toolkit includes information on the date for the Elections, the closing date for registering to vote, the role of the Liverpool City Region, and frequently asked questions and answers and a link to the information website – www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/election

3.2. Single Investment Fund (SIF)

The SIF Prospectus was launched in September 2016 and extensive activity is underway to progress funding and implementation of projects and initiatives. Recent developments include a specific call for skills capital investment projects; these are currently being appraised using a robust process set of principles to deliver the best returns and economic outcomes for the City Region. All projects which are approved will be publicised appropriately and in line with the Combined Authority/LEP communications plan.

3.3. Review of Apprenticeships across the LCR

The Combined Authority Scrutiny Panel has included a focus on Employment and Skills, and as part of that, carried out a review into Apprenticeships provision within the City Region. The review acknowledges that:

- A skilled workforce and resident population are essential in raising employment and productivity levels across the Liverpool City Region. The CA recognises that it must respond to skills needs of businesses within its knowledge economy and other key growth sectors. Apprenticeship provision is key to tackling skills gaps and ensuring employers are able to develop the skills they need to increase their competitiveness;

- Current skills levels in the LCR are amongst the highest they have ever been. The proportion of working age residents with recognised qualifications has consistently increased over the last 10 years;
- The LCR has established a successful approach to apprenticeship activity - eg through the Apprenticeship Hub - enabling the LCR to create excellent numbers and quality of apprenticeships. The impending apprenticeship reforms provide the opportunity for the City Region to take this to the next level, supporting employers to create focused apprenticeships which meet the needs of their sectors.
- There are an increasing number of starts for advanced and higher level apprenticeships, and there are now degree level apprenticeships being offered. These options need to be communicated more widely.
- The review highlights the importance for the CA to build on this successful approach and further increase awareness and promote apprenticeships with employers, schools, partners and young people.

The review also points out the need to consider the implications of the imminent changes to Government apprentice policy and reforms to apprentices – in particular the Apprentice Levy. Wirral and the City Region are exploring a twin track approach to developing a longer term vision for apprentices by focusing actions on what Local Authorities can do as a collective group of employers, and what the LCR can influence across the wider public sector e.g. Health, Education, Fire and Police.

Wirral is currently reviewing its apprentice programmes, and will continue to work with LCR partners to ensure a strategic approach that helps to achieve the Wirral Plan and Pledge priorities.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Devolution arrangements propose the devolution of resources to City Region.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Council agreed the LCR Order in December 2016. The Constitution of the Combined Authority now requires amendment to reflect the new governance arrangements and the powers and functions set out in the LCR Order. Amendments to the Combined Authority constitution need the unanimous agreement of the CA Constituent members.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

At this time, no additional cost is expected to be incurred by LCR local authorities as a result of the new arrangements to deliver the devolution deal.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Wirral, along with City Region partners, continues to circulate information and raise awareness of the devolution developments and forthcoming mayoral elections through a range of methods.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equality implications associated with this report as it deals with the issue of devolution at a strategic level. Equality analysis will be carried out as part of the detailed implementation as appropriate.

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	12 July 2013
Cabinet	8 August 2013
Cabinet and Council	19 September 2013
Cabinet and Council	10 March 2014
Council	19 November 2015
P&P Regeneration & Environment Committee	18 January 2016
P&P Regeneration & Environment Committee	2 March 2016
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13 September 2016
Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee	24 January 2017
Council	14 November 2016
Cabinet	8 December 2017
Council	6 December 2016