

**CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT**

<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor Matthew Patrick
<b>CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR</b>	Localism & Engagement
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

**1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

I am pleased to confirm Community Action Wirral is to launch a ‘volunteering section’ within Wirral View in the coming weeks, allowing community organisations and charities to advertise volunteering vacancies – for free – to local residents. Connecting local people with services is exactly why Wirral View was created in the first place and I am delighted we are able to work with our partners to create such a helpful feature.

Encouraging and enabling local people to volunteer their time and expertise is extremely important, and why we developed the ‘Wirral Together’ volunteering strategy earlier this year: it is good for the community, and good for the health and wellbeing of the people who volunteer.

That is why I was so pleased to create our new policy to allow Council staff to take time off from work to volunteer at local community organisations. We are now in the process of fully rolling out the policy and I hope to be highlighting to the Chamber many examples of how this new policy has supported local causes in the coming months.

Members will also be aware that we have been conducting an extensive review of our Neighbourhood working model and constituency committees. I would like to thank all Members who have given up their time to provide extremely valuable opinions, ideas and suggestions for how we might improve the approach. I will be bringing initial ideas and proposals to Cabinet in the coming weeks, and I will of course be seeking the views of Members of all parties to develop a collaborative new approach which meets the needs of our residents.

During this review, I am pleased to say that the positive work with local communities has not slowed down at all. The points below give a short update on the progress which has taken place across the borough.

£7,000 was secured from the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver The Pathfinder Project, which is a partnership of Gautby Road Community Centre, police, Youth Offending Team and Birkenhead Constituency. The project aims to prevent reoffending in young people by providing a range of interventions after a first arrest. Interventions include workshops and gym sessions with Sean 'Masher' Dodd, visits to HMP Altcourse and training at Fulwood Barracks, support from Youth Offending Team and Positive futures after care.

Over 30 Birkenhead groups attended the Royal Horticultural Society's North West in Bloom awards ceremony in Southport on 2nd and 3rd November. They all won awards and were given certificates. Oxtun won the best village cup and Wirral was highly commended on participating in the competition with such diverse and high level projects.

In partnership with New Brighton Coastal Community Team, colleagues facilitated the opening in October 2017 of an Information Point to support the circa 1 million visitors to New Brighton a year. The Visitor Information Point is located in Marine Park (opposite Morrisons), utilising a formerly empty room at the rear of the bowling pavilion. Working with the local community, the Information Point is operated and staffed entirely by volunteers from the New Brighton Community Partnership who is working with local traders and groups to promote the many things to see and do across the resort. New Brighton-related merchandise by local artists and small businesses is also being promoted from the Information Point, which is operating on key weekends for tourism.

The constituency teams have been working hard to support the residents of New Ferry and its various community based organisations on a number of projects. New Beginnings (soon to be formed as a Community Interest Company) formed from a willing group of volunteers, supporting their community in the aftermath of the explosion in March this year. In this short period of time they have generated funds, secured external funding and are now set to open their Community Resource and Support Centre at the end of January.

Eastham Connects had its partner launch on Wednesday the 22nd of November at the Delamere Centre in Eastham. Individuals and groups from all parts of a Wirral neighbourhood are looking to come together in a major new initiative aimed at tackling social isolation. The local constituency committee, elected members and community representatives are spearheading the project which they hope will pull the local community closer together and work in a cohesive way to improve the wellbeing of some of the area's most vulnerable or isolated residents.

Last year the Council started work on an exciting partnership with the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA) to deliver their Theatre for Democracy module. I have been delighted to oversee this work, given the opportunity it presents to develop new ways of engaging with our local communities. The eight week module involves Community Drama students from LIPA meeting regularly with community groups in a number of areas to research and create a series of performances, with a focus on identifying ideas and solutions for sustainable change and improvement. A number of groups have been recruited with support

from the constituency teams and have been working with LIPA for some weeks culminating in a series of performances at Meadowcroft in Bromborough, the Heart of Egremont Community Centre, the Carrbridge Centre in Woodchurch and Livingstone Community Centre in Birkenhead. The students have been exploring a wide range of issues with those involved including transport links, anti-social behaviour, volunteering and mental health. LIPA students will then present the findings of the project to myself, Council officers and partners on the 13th December at Birkenhead Town Hall.

Finally, the Connect Us project has worked with the neighbourhoods and engagement team and a range of other organisations to map and share information about events over the festive season which individuals and families can access to alleviate hardship or loneliness. Wirral View will include as much as possible of what's available either in its published version on the 'what's on' website and the list is being circulated widely across all community networks.