

COUNCIL

10 DECEMBER 2018

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Phil Davies
CABINET PORTFOLIO	Leader of the Council
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Eric Robinson, 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 NEW FERRY

I find it impossible to start my update to Council with anything other than New Ferry, and the seemingly impossible struggle to convince national Government that this community deserves their attention and support.

Last time this Council met, Members of all parties resolved to instruct the Chief Executive to once again lobby Government to request the residents of New Ferry receive direct financial support, through the Bellwin scheme or any other appropriate route which would see help provided. This is the same Government which rightly supported communities affected by the Grenfell Tower disaster, the attack in Salisbury and the fire at Hinckley in Leicester.

At the time of writing, this latest letter has not been acknowledged or responded to. In fact, the Secretary of State has written to the MP for Wirral South and implied this Council has not requested financial support for New Ferry at all. This is patently untrue.

Members of Wirral Council need to be fully briefed on the facts of this case. On 7 July 2017, I wrote to Jake Berry MP, minister for the northern powerhouse, asking for financial support. This request was refused on 17 July 2017 on the basis that in the Government's view for "an incident of this size and impact we would expect these costs to be covered using existing local resources".

Since then, Wirral Council worked with local community groups to submit a New Ferry Regeneration Plan and sought government help with the rebuilding of the town. It is now more than one year since that regeneration plan was submitted to Government. Again, no offer of help has been forthcoming.

It is absolutely clear: if we want to rebuild New Ferry and support the local community to create a thriving retail centre once more, then we must forget any notion of direct national support and get on with the job ourselves.

We will work alongside the town team, local residents and the ward members to secure regional funding to make sure New Ferry people get the help they deserve.

Read my public comments on this issue in the [Wirral Globe](#).

2 WIRRAL TOGETHER

Last month at Cabinet we agreed a new way of supporting and engaging our communities, providing more support to local Ward Members at the same time. The Wirral Together fund will replace the existing Constituency Committee funding, and remove the requirement for the Committees to meet publicly.

I hope this decision, and the allocation of individual budgets for Ward Members to invest in their communities, will help every Member in the Chamber make an impact on the issues which are most important to their constituents.

Read more in the [Wirral Globe](#).

3 WIRRAL: LIVERPOOL CITY REGION BOROUGH OF CULTURE

At the outset of 2018, we said our new Imagine Wirral programme would deliver something special. We said it would attract hundreds of thousands of new visitors to our borough, showcasing what makes Wirral special to a bigger audience than ever before. I am so proud of what we delivered.

From Giants, to cardboard castles, light shows in Hamilton Square and exhibitions from world-famous photographers, Imagine Wirral had something for everyone and delivered on every promise.

The finale was the triumphant return of the River of Light.

River of Light: The Elements saw the return of Titanium Fireworks, who wowed crowds last year with a jaw dropping display. Titanium Fireworks have previously worked on national events including the Mayor of London's New Year's Eve party, Edinburgh's Hogmanay and the opening ceremony for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Hundreds of thousands lined both sides of the River Mersey, from the Pier Head and New Brighton, to enjoy a spectacular event: world-class fireworks combined with street theatre and family entertainment. It was a fitting way to end what has been a quite incredible year.

Watch the final displays from our [Twitter page](#) and read the [Wirral Globe](#) and [Liverpool Echo](#) for some fantastic photos from an unforgettable evening. Well done to everyone involved.

These innovative and exciting events are helping us make best use of our heritage, leisure and cultural assets to drive tourism, which in turn increases revenue for Wirral's visitor economy. We are on track to achieve the £450 million visitor economy target we committed to in our Wirral Plan.

Finally, Council will be aware that after the stunning success of our Imagine Wirral programme, we have been selected as the Borough of Culture for the Liverpool City Region in 2019.

We will use this fantastic opportunity to once again raise Wirral's profile throughout the UK. Members should look out for a series of exciting announcements over the

coming weeks and months as we finalise plans for events and attractions which will even outstrip the success of 2018.