

COUNCIL
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CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Julie McManus
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Community Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the **Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Services** to Members of the Council on matters relevant to the portfolio.

HIGHWAYS

Street Lighting

Work has started on the second phase of the LED streetlight replacement programme. Within this two-year programme there are plans to see a further 26,000 streetlights upgraded and this work will be carried out by SSE Enterprise Contracting. This is the largest scheme that has been undertaken by the Council and will dramatically improve Wirral's street lighting by improving safety and future-proofing the network whilst also reducing energy use and helping to cut our carbon emissions.

Streetlights are an important asset for the Council and are vitally important to our residents. Throughout the summer our teams have doubled the number of daily repairs with Mega Electrical working with us to assist with our maintenance programme. Work began last month to replace damaged street lighting columns. Cable and electrical faults can often mean multiple lights are out in one area and we will be seeking specialists to assist with repairs on this, to begin in the coming months.

Resurfacing programme

Significant investment was made into our road's maintenance programme for this year. Our major road maintenance programme began this summer with close to £5 million being spent on repairs to our roads and work is still underway. By receiving additional funding from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for works on the Key Route Network, our programme has been able to undertake further substantial works to repair and improve the borough's roads and footways.

The funding has enabled Hot Rolled Asphalt, surface dressing and micro asphalt treatments to take place on our roads and a programme to improve and treat approximately 100 footways across Wirral to improve the pedestrian network.

The roads selected for repair were identified following independent condition surveys in addition to reports from highways inspectors, councillors and members of the public.

A41 Key Route Network

The New Ferry and Rock Ferry bypass, along the route to the Birkenhead Tunnel entrance, is undergoing improvement works over the coming months. This is part of the in the A41 Corridor Improvement Programme. The scheme, in which £3.4 million will be invested is jointly funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Wirral Council.

The work includes the resurfacing of 9.4km of road, improvements to 198 streetlights, the upgrading of 4.3km of safety fencing, 7km of cabling works and improvements made to bridge deck waterproofing and jointing, forming part of the investment into maintaining our highways.

PARKS

Green Flag awards for Parks

27 Wirral parks and green spaces were nationally recognised in the annual Green Flag Awards coordinated by Keep Britain Tidy. This figure is up from 26 last year – and once again Wirral has more Green Flags than any other local authority in the whole of the North West region. The Green Flag Awards are given to the country's best run and maintained parks and green spaces and provide confirmation that Wirral's green spaces boast the highest possible environmental standards, are beautifully maintained and have excellent visitor facilities.

This is a great achievement and testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff and members of the public who volunteer their time to maintain these green spaces to an exceptional standard.

Full list of green flag winners on Wirral View: <https://wirralview.com/news/wirral-parks-best-north-west-again>

Fields of Trust awards

Birkenhead Park was one of 11 parks in the North West to be awarded 'Much Loved' status by Fields of Trust. These nominations are championed and voted for by park users, communities, Friends of groups, landowners and elected representatives as part of the public vote.

Birkenhead Park centre of major events

Testament to how fantastic our parks are, Birkenhead Park provided the perfect environment to host an unforgettable weekend of food, drink and music, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors as part of a programme of major events for Wirral's year as Borough of Culture. Events included the Wirral stage of the OVO Energy Tour of Britain which started and finished in the Park, the all-new Wirral Food and Drink Festival and outdoor evening performances by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Lightning Seeds, The Christians and China Crisis.

LEISURE

External Funding Secured

Leisure has secured a £74,500 Sport England grant to run a targeted place-based programme to support people with long term health conditions become physically active. We are one of 10 local authorities who were awarded funding as part of the National #WeAreUndefeatable campaign. The project will see the service develop a project with ambassadors across the Borough.

Invigor8

- In a very competitive fitness market in Wirral, the Invigor8 Membership reached a 20-month high at 16.7k members in July, with an average of 30 members joining each day.
- Targeted summer teen Invigor8 campaign saw 1,100 new teens and students take up a membership with us. There was a year on year increase of 35%
- New state of the art functional gym kit added to Leasowe, Guinea Gap and West Kirby resulting in a fitness offer now appropriate to the customer base and localised latent demand.
- Gym kit upgrade programme with the introduction of new wifi connected and interactive consoles on cardio kit, allowing customers to track workouts on their smart devices, check their Facebook profile or watch Netflix (via their own account) all while exercising.

Macmillan Notes

Funded two-year programme which is one of six across the Merseyside region and is hosted in partnership with leisure services. Over 11,000 people living with and beyond cancer on the Wirral with around 1,500 diagnosed every year.

When the project went live in April 2018 the two-year target was to undertake 550 holistic needs assessments. To date the team have undertaken 870 within 18 months.

The results have been outstanding with participant feedback indicating that 80% have reduced their GP visits and 65% have reduced their medication levels. More than 700 participants have increased their activity levels via the pathway and partnership with leisure services

The project has been short listed for a National Macmillan award in November and is up against many of the 'big hitters' in terms of cancer that include St. Thomas and Guys hospitals in London

LIBRARIES

The Summer Reading Challenge

Wirral Libraries have taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge since 1999. The scheme is the largest national reading project in the UK and is aimed at promoting reading for pleasure, primarily to school age children between the ages of four and 11.

With the help of teenage volunteers, the library staff supports the children throughout the summer, helping them to explore a wide range of books and to discover new authors, and collecting incentives along the way.

Children's reading motivation and attainment can "dip" during the summer holidays. The aim of the challenge is to encourage regular access to books and promote the idea of reading for pleasure. This helps the children to maintain their reading skills and confidence, ready for their return to school in September. A total of 4,062 children in Wirral took part, with 2,659 completing the challenge.

Summer Activities

A full programme of activities and entertainment was put on in libraries through the summer. Craft activity sessions were based on the theme of space and sessions also included a story time. Approximately 112 events were held with more than 3,000 children and their parents/carers attending.

Health and wellbeing

Libraries are key to the reduction of social isolation and hold a number of activities and events which support health and wellbeing including monthly dementia friendly afternoons. We hosted a memories afternoon in September at Birkenhead library and more than 30 people attended. We are in discussion with a pre-school about having a joint event with some of our customers who have dementia.

Digital

Key area of library work is the promotion, support and delivery of digital options and the Friends of Wirral Libraries help us with this as they do in all our areas which the service greatly appreciates. As an example, Friends of Irby Library are purchasing tablets for us to support customers in accessing online services. We will be out in shopping centres promoting the library offer of e-books, e-audio books and e-magazines. Code Clubs are increasingly popular in libraries, delivered by volunteers.

Regional

Customers are now able to use their Wirral library card to borrow books, access library computers and printers from other libraries across the Liverpool City Region (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral).

Food for Fines (7-13 October)

During this week customers will be able to clear unpaid fines and return long overdue books by donating food and toiletries for Wirral foodbank. This will also encourage customers back into libraries by removing the barrier of unpaid fine.

Supporting Cultural events

Libraries that had the Tour of Britain passing by or nearby decorated their windows with cycles. Moreton Library staff decorated a bike provide by the Culture Team. This is to be gifted to a local school.

Wirral Libraries also ran a colouring competition for a "Team Library" cycling jersey. This proved extremely popular with more than 120 entries, with two winning book tokens.

Birkenhead Library hosted in partnership with 'Get it Loud in Libraries' a successful Sunday afternoon matinee gig by artist Hannah Cohen with more than 100 people attending – these are proving to be very popular and promote the view that libraries are cultural hubs and far more than "just books".

Floral Pavilion

The Floral Pavilion hosted the box office services for the Birkenhead Park food and drink festival working closely with the Culture team in delivering the event. This being an exemplary example of the Council using its skills and expertise to deliver a great service and create income for the council instead of using external agencies.

The theatre launched the 19/20 autumn – winter brochure illustrating our programme of shows which is full of the best music, theatre, comedy and family fun events.

Hosting their annual AGM, the Floral Pavilion welcomed the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cheshire Freemason who hired the venue for a full day for 800 delegates and VIP guests. A great event that welcomed people from all over the North West to New Brighton.

As well as seeing sell out events from artists such as Lulu, September also saw the start of our new parents and toddler session based every weekday morning in the plaza area of the venue, providing a community space to enjoy classes that engage pre-school toddlers whilst providing a supportive environment for new parents. During this time our café offers free baby food to encourage parents to relax and meet other likeminded parents.