

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Janette Williamson
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Finance and Resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources to Members of the Council on matters relevant to the portfolio.

Recent months have seen the Council taking bold steps to ensure the least well off and most vulnerable are given greater opportunities and protections, while at the same time ensuring council tax-payers can receive the best possible value for money.

1 COMMUNITY BANK

It is estimated that there are almost 6,000 households in Wirral without a bank account who face paying a “poverty premium” because they cannot access lower prices, for example for energy and utilities through direct debits from a bank account rather than expensive pre-payment meters.

In addition, Wirral’s economy is dominated by the SME sector – of the 8,550 enterprises in the borough, only 20 have 250 or more employees – many of which struggle to obtain credit from big banks.

Last month the cabinet agreed to an initial investment in a new community bank.

The aim is to allow residents who have difficulty obtaining a current account to access the full range of banking services, as well as helping Wirral’s many small and medium sized businesses who need to access credit. At the same time, it will bring banks back to the borough’s high streets and place cash machines where people most need them – at a time when free to use ATMs are being removed from the least affluent areas.

The bank is being set up in partnership between Wirral, Preston and Liverpool and will operate across the north west of England. The bank will form an integral part of our wider Community Wealth Building strategy which aims to build up the local economy from the grassroots.

2 DYING TO WORK

Wirral Council has signed up to a [charter aimed at helping employees who become terminally ill](#) at work.

The Dying to Work Voluntary Charter is part of the TUC’s wider Dying to Work campaign which is seeking greater security for terminally ill workers where they cannot be dismissed as a result of their condition.

Signing up to the charter will provide our employees with the security of work, peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families and maintain their dignity and without undue financial loss. It will also mean they have employment protection and have their benefits protected for the loved ones they leave behind.

3 NEW FERRY

I am happy to report that the hardship fund of £200,000 for those affected by the New Ferry explosion in 2017 has been paid to all applicants, with one appeal pending.

It followed discussions with elected members and members of the New Ferry and Port Sunlight communities to ensure the funds set aside by Cabinet in February this year is allocated efficiently and fairly.

83 people were identified as being made homeless for more than a week after the explosion on March 25th, 2017, while businesses were also affected as a result of being situated within the emergency police cordon in the days following the incident.

Some will also be used as a community fund to be allocated as grants to social sector organisations in the area under a bidding process.

The council has also invested over £1m in capital funding to buy up properties along Bebington Road, as part of a long-term strategy to regenerate New Ferry.

4 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The official International Women's Day (IWD) organisation recognised Wirral Council's 2019 IWD celebration as an example of best practice worldwide.

Chosen from over 300 entrants, Wirral was selected as one of four successful case studies in the public sector category, for 'Forging Leadership and Progress' – sharing its title with NHS Digital, the British Army, and High Commissioner of Canada to Guyana & Suriname.

The council event took place at Wallasey Town Hall and celebrated International Women's Day while reflecting on the first year of the Council's Women into Leadership Programme.

This consolidates the vital role women have as leaders in Wirral Council, and is reflected at Cabinet and Leadership level with 60% female Cabinet members and two female Deputy Leaders

5 NO P.O. NO PAY

The council introduced the 'No PO, No Pay' policy earlier this year to continue to improve value for money.

All invoices received for the council to pay should have an official purchase order number on. If there isn't a valid purchase order on the invoice, it won't be paid, and it will be sent back to the supplier.

This includes all goods, services and works commissioned from suppliers and providers.

6 APSE AWARD

This award won by Wirral Council was presented by APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) in their annual National Service Awards. Wirral were shortlisted in two categories – "Best Health & Wellbeing Initiative" and "Best Innovation and Demand Initiative", winning the award for the latter category.

This recognition is the highlight of what has been an incredibly successful year for this programme – finalists in The Social Value Awards, Go Procurement Awards and LGC Awards – demonstrating the invaluable contribution it has made to the lives of young people.

The award recognised this pioneering programme, which has enormous long-term financial benefits, and sees Wirral working with its direct supply chain providing opportunities to disadvantaged young people through full time work and apprenticeships. It enables young people to feel valued, supported, optimistic about their future and recognise the benefits and of full-time employment whilst being less reliant on the local authority. Our Social Value policy underpins our wider Community Wealth Building strategy

7 MYWIRRAL ACCOUNTS

Wirral residents can now request more council services via a new online portal – making it easier to track the progress of applications via their computer or smartphone.

By registering for a MyWirral account, residents can access services including bins and recycling, council tax, benefits, business rates, parking, housing and much more.

Signing up for a MyWirral account means that customer details are saved, so residents are no longer required to enter the same personal information with each new request.

The newest service to be added to the portal is the system for garden waste collection. Residents can use MyWirral to subscribe to garden waste collection, change their address for garden waste, and request a refund.

Environmental problems can also be reported via MyWirral, such as dog fouling, litter and graffiti. Residents can access support on planning and housing, plus roads and travel – making it easier to give feedback on proposed traffic schemes.