

COUNCIL
9 DECEMBER 2019

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Pat Hackett
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Leader of the Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Leader of the Council to Members of the Council on matters relevant to the portfolio.

WIRRAL: LIVERPOOL CITY REGION BOROUGH OF CULTURE

As our year as Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture comes to an end, Wirral has – as I noted at the last meeting – been well and truly placed on the national and international map.

Since the last report we have seen the Moon visit Birkenhead town hall and thousands of people were able to enjoy this extraordinary exhibition.

We also had the return of the Fireworks spectacular River of Light which dazzled tens of thousands of people in New Brighton and on Liverpool’s waterfronts, as well as displays also taking place in parks across the borough across the weekend.

This year’s River of Light was accompanied by a soundtrack of popular songs from artists who have performed in the city this year, and even before the fireworks started there was plenty to see and do for all the family in New Brighton with live music, movement and lighting performances and delicious hot food and drink on offer.

BIRKENHEAD

Birkenhead is one of 100 towns that have recently been selected nationally to work towards a Town Deal as part of Government’s £3.6bn Towns Fund to further improve the ability of towns to realise their growth ambitions. The list included four towns from the Liverpool City Region – Birkenhead, Runcorn, Southport and St Helens. They can apply for up to £25m to support their approaches to economic regeneration, infrastructure and housing.

This grant ties in with the work of the Wirral Growth Company which has recently been carrying out the second phase of consultation on the future of Birkenhead and seeking the views of residents, visitors and shoppers as well as businesses and traders, and work on this regeneration continues to make good progress.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

The Council has been working closely with the LCR Combined Authority and in my role as portfolio holder for Inclusive Economy & Third Sector have been able to bring forward many millions of pounds of investment which will help local businesses across the entire city region including Wirral as well as supporting more people into high quality employment. The Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) is being used to support business and growth and skills development across the city region.

This is all about inclusive growth – the Combined Authority £75m SME growth programme is not only helping businesses to grow, it is also helping our residents find good work in these growing businesses.

Some examples of the recent work includes:

- Agent Academy, which helps young people from less advantaged backgrounds into good jobs in the digital and creative industries. It takes groups onto a twelve week programme with training and real work experience, with more than 90% of finishers finding a full time role. The project provides £700,000 to expand this successful programme, with ambitions to expand from Liverpool's Baltic Triangle into Wirral and St Helens.
- In October alone £47 million of SIF funding was announced including the £20million Flexible Growth Fund to provide flexible, low interest loans to companies that wish to expand. An additional £4.5m of SIF is committed to the Inward Investment Facilitation Fund and we hope to commit an additional £2.5m of ERDF in due course, to incentivise companies to locate in our City Region, and the Createch Scale Up Programme, which is about helping tech enabled businesses grow. These businesses can be found all over our City Region, from Southport to Birkenhead to Daresbury, and our aim is to take around 180 businesses through a networking and growth programme - and to create an innovative platform for the creative and digital sector in our city region.
- Work has been ongoing in developing a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), a key strategic priority that will set out the City Region's economic strengths, our challenges, and how we can best address them. The total commitment is £4.1m – including a contingency – for developments in North Liverpool, St Helens, Wirral and Knowsley to develop a total of approximately 235,000 square feet of light industrial space – the kind that local engineers, medical manufacturers or events companies might need.
- The £11.75 million national children's museum Eureka! has now been given planning permission to press ahead with plans at Seacombe Ferry Terminal. Expected to attract almost 200,000 visitors a year and contribute to the local economy it has been made possible because of a £6.4m contribution from the Combined Authority in addition to £200,000 from Wirral Council and £200,000 from a national charity.