

COUNCIL
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CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Tony Jones
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Regeneration and Growth

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth to Members of the Council on matters relevant to the portfolio.

OVERVIEW:

Delivery of the Growth Plan continues to progress well with a full schedule of planned activities to support growth. Highlights for pledge indicators in the second quarter of this financial year include a continued strong employment rate following last year's continuous improvement trend, with Wirral outperforming the North West average by 2.4 percentage points, and, for the first time, the England average by 0.8 percentage points. Key activity highlights include:

EMPLOYMENT:

The European funded Wirral Ways to Work Programme continues to perform ahead of target, supporting 6,150 participants since its start in April 2016.

Local voluntary organisation, Involve North West, has successfully secured contracts through competitive tendering exercises to deliver two of Wirral Council's key employment support projects, the Worklessness Support Project and the Community Connectors Project, ensuring continuation of these successful services beyond 2020.

SKILLS:

As part of a Combined Authority wide programme, Households Into Work, 39 participants were engaged on the programme in Wirral during Q2. The programme aims to help people who are long term unemployed, find employment or at least help them to overcome the barriers that are preventing them from seeking employment.

There are now 365 participants (237 households) in total and Wirral has delivered a 38% overachievement against its target in terms of the number of primary householders engaged on the programme. 16 participants were supported into employment in Q2 giving a cumulative total of 47.

INVESTMENT:

There has been significant progress made on the development of plans for the centre of Birkenhead with a second stage consultation taking place on proposals including a new business district of high quality offices, alongside a new residential neighbourhood, an improved market, leisure space and extensive public realm improvements.

The proposals, led by the Wirral Growth Company, aim to create a vibrant, revitalised town centre and dynamic evening economy. Events have been held across Birkenhead to display the proposals that were developed following the first stage of consultation.

Also in November, the Council's Cabinet approved the purchase of shop units at Milton Pavement and unit 13-15 at St Werburgh's Square. The "strategic" purchase of Milton Pavement, which is close to other sites owned by the Council, will aid delivery of redevelopment proposals arising from the public consultation.

At Wirral Waters, planning approval was granted to the £4m Egerton Village waterside development, located at Four Bridges, adjacent to Wirral Metropolitan College the proposed new No 1 Tower Road South office block. It will comprise of a dockside restaurant and bistro, small independent retail units, artists' studios, managed workspace and a large public events space and the proposed new Maritime Knowledge Hub that is focused on the hydraulic tower building. A SIF bid is also currently running with the Combined Authority to help develop the Maritime Knowledge Hub at the grade 2 listed Hydraulic Tower building on Tower Road.

The £11.75 million national children's museum Eureka! has received planning permission to take over the existing Spaceport building at Seacombe Ferry Terminal and is expected to attract almost 200,000 visitors a year.

As well as contributing to the local economy and creating more than 90 jobs, Eureka! Mersey will be focused on children and families and will address a gap in the current offer around science. Significant progress has been made in finalising the funding package for Eureka! Mersey with confirmation of three awards this quarter: £6.4m from the Combined Authority, £200k from Wirral Council and £200k from a national charity.

BUSINESS:

The LEP Commissioned Wirral Growth Hub performance continues to over-achieve on scheduled targets, with 266 business engagements recorded in Q2. Wirral Chamber supports business growth through activities such as website audits, marketing plans, marketing campaigns, social media strategies, business plan development, advertising and HR support, and a range of business skills workshops.

Wirral Chamber is working in partnership with Wirral Council & the Department of Business Energy & Industrial Strategy to support businesses with Brexit Readiness. A readiness training programme took place in October with information sessions, strategy planning and dedicated advisory support.

The Council is working with colleagues from across Liverpool City Region and the Combined Authority to develop the programme for The Good Business Festival (TGBF). TGBF will replace the International Business Festival, which has been hosted biannually in LCR since 2014.

The festival will bring together thought leaders from around the world to explore themes relating to the business benefits of 'doing good'. The festival will take place in October 2020 and will be delivered in partnership between Culture Liverpool and Hemingway Design. The Council will ensure that Wirral's businesses, community groups and young people are aware of, involved in and able to benefit from the Festival.