

COUNCIL
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CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Janette Williamson
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Finance & Income Generation
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Shaer Halewood – Director of Finance and Investment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to her portfolio.

DELIVERING A FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE BUDGET

Earlier this month Members in this Chamber voted to set a fair, sustainable budget which meets residents' needs. Even while we remain under relentless pressure from central government to continually cut budgets and services, this Council can be proud that we have protected the most vulnerable, not closed services, and avoided compulsory redundancies.

I was especially pleased last month to be able to bring forward a proposal which would see thousands of low-income families in Wirral given new reductions in their council tax bills. In 2013 the Government abolished council tax benefit for hundreds of thousands of low-income households across the country.

They replaced this support with the local council tax support scheme, cutting the funding by 10% at the same time. The decision disadvantaged thousands of vulnerable, low-income Wirral families. Since its implementation, Wirral has tried its best to retain protection for these households, giving them the support which they need.

This scheme helps us go further, and will see more than 9,000 households across the borough benefit from the planned reduction scheme, following an £800,000 investment by the council

Read more about this initiative in the [Liverpool Echo](#) and [Wirral Globe](#).

Members should also be aware of our capital investment into restoring an iconic building in Lower Bebington. 65 The Village will see £175,000 worth of improvements in the coming months, helping it become a community hub for local services.

These buildings are of such importance to Bebington and Wirral as a whole as they are part of the legacy of what Joseph Mayer did to enhance the lives of ordinary people in the area.

Because of the way we have modernised and reorganised services during these times of austerity, because we manage our finances well and take opportunities to maximise our income, we are now in a position where we can invest in things such as refurbishing the historic 65 The Village building as part of our Community Wealth Building strategy.

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

This new approach to keeping wealth in our community was also front and centre of our work the past few months, particularly when we held our Community Wealth Building Conference in Birkenhead Town Hall.

In Wirral, we are already proud of what we are doing to stand up for the borough and respond to austerity policies. Through Wirral Growth Company, we are charting a new path to not only regenerate the borough but also help the council pay for front-line services people rely on.

I hope we can now build on the progress we have made and learn from places such as Preston and continue to bring in the revenue we need to replace our lost income and fund our services at the level they need.

I would like to highlight to Members a new partnership which we have developed to help voluntary and community groups in the borough access more funding. The partnership will see the council link up with Lloyds Bank Foundation and Capacity: The Public Services Lab to help support groups in Wirral.

It aims to ensure contracts, help and support from public agencies in the borough are awarded to local community and voluntary agencies while making sure they receive one-to-one support from experts who will help them write business plans and bids.

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

Finally, Members should be aware that I will be leading a redesign of how our capital programme is developed and delivered. I want to make sure Members of all parties are better informed and engaged on capital programmes and the entire programme is Member-led. I will be in touch with more details soon.