

# **Portfolio report – Regeneration and Growth: Cllr Tony Jones**

## **1. INVESTMENT**

### **Birkenhead Regeneration Framework**

Wirral Council has commissioned Avison Young to develop a Birkenhead Regeneration Framework with area-based Delivery Action Plans which will shape future investment and regeneration plans for the area. The draft BRF will be delivered April 2020.

### **Future High Streets Birkenhead**

In July 2019 the Council was informed that Birkenhead and New Ferry has progressed to the final stage of the Future High Streets Fund programme which allows the selected Town Centres to bid for up to £25m of government funds to transform their high streets (average award expected to be between £5-10m). The application criteria for Future High Streets Fund requires the need to demonstrate stringent value for money assessment in terms of the uplift in economic benefits provided by investment from the fund. The Council received a development grant from government to support the development of its application and has subsequently commissioned and appointed specialist regeneration consultant Avison Young to develop a Treasury Green Book Compliant Full Business Case submission.

Birkenhead stands on the threshold of transformative change, with a unique alignment of assets and circumstances that we believe presents the biggest and best regeneration opportunity in the country. Future High Streets Fund will ensure that we are able to deliver on the scale and pace of our ambition for Birkenhead Town Centre. A £25m bid has been submitted in draft to Government which includes strategic acquisitions; enhanced public realm and supporting infrastructure for a new commercial district which will deliver diversity and immediate footfall; a revitalised and reinvigorated market and enhanced connectivity and wayfinding, including a number of infrastructure improvements to reduce car dominance and create a safer environment for road users and pedestrians. Feedback from Government on this first draft is expected mid-March in advance of the final submission on 30 April 2020. Successful applicants are expected to be announced in Summer/Autumn 2020.

### **Hind Street (Birkenhead)**

The council in partnership with consultants Avison Young will shortly commence a masterplanning exercise to facilitate development opportunities for this area of Birkenhead.

### **Wirral Waters**

- Essential remediation, infrastructure and public realm work has commenced at Wirral Waters, following a £6m Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Award from Homes England. The brownfield site improvements will also include a programme of streetscape work, such as the creation of dockside walkways and new public squares; improvements to connectivity between local bus and ferry services, cycles ways and pedestrian routes; and improvements to local amenities and car parking. This investment will support three residential projects: Wirral Waters One, a £90m development of one and two-bedroom apartments and affordable homes; the £55m House by Urban Splash development of modern, modular homes; and Belong Village, a specialist dementia care village.
- A Government minister visited Wirral in January to support the Maritime Knowledge Hub, which will be located in a Grade II-listed Victorian hydraulic tower at Wirral Waters. Following the visit, the minister said: “A key part of growing our world class maritime industry is its people, and the Maritime Knowledge Hub will be vital in training the next generation of mariners and ensuring our industry continues to thrive.” This will be followed up with the new minister now in post.
- A planning application will be submitted for MEA Park Phase II in the coming weeks. This development represents approximately £6m investment to create 12 new units for light industrial uses as part of the wider MEA Park Masterplan, which is targeted to provide a sector-focused environment to support business growth and capacity. The project will be supported by £1.5m from Wirral Waters Investment Fund.
- A £3.2m programme of public realm and green infrastructure improvements will commence at Tower Road South in the coming weeks. This work will create wider pavements, improved pedestrian and cyclist facilities, distinctive street lighting, tree planting and groundcover.

### **Wirral Growth Company**

- Stage 2 public consultation on Birkenhead town centre development completed – findings worked into masterplan. Full report available online [www.wirralgrowthcompany.co.uk](http://www.wirralgrowthcompany.co.uk)
- Partnership Business Plan and draft indicative Site Development Plans for initial priority sites agreed by JV Board in January 2020 and Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020
- Pre-planning meetings and public consultation on Foxfield site carried out in February 2020. Findings currently being assessed and incorporated into emerging plans.
- Public consultation for Moreton Pasture Road site planned for May 2020.
- Pre-planning work for Birkenhead town centre development ongoing and on track for submission of planning application early summer 2020.

## **Liscard**

- £1m grant funding agreement and detailed Action Plans for Liscard and New Ferry formally approved by Combined Authority in January
- Plans have been developed following engagement and consultation with ward councillors, local traders and stakeholders and will be delivered over 18 months to June 2021.
- Liscard activity will include: street scene enhancements, diversionary activity for young people to reduce anti-social behaviour, and development of a pump track cycle facility in Central Park; a business grant scheme to support new and existing businesses and reduce empty shops; an events programme to animate the town centre and increase visitor footfall. An integrated masterplan will be commissioned to develop a long-term vision for Liscard which could support a bid to Round 2 of the government's Future High Streets Fund.

## **New Ferry**

The council has been working on a number of initiatives to support the regeneration of New Ferry, which includes a regeneration masterplan, a £1.3million acquisition programme, the LCR Town Centre Fund and applying to the Government's Future High Street Fund:

- Strategic Acquisitions – the council have recently purchased the freehold of the explosion site (41-43 Bebington Road). It will shortly be tendering for works to remove the concrete floor slab and foundations to enable the land to be used for meanwhile uses by the Community until construction work takes place. This will coincide with the simultaneous demolition of the derelict and unsightly former Griffiths's butchers shop (68-72 Bebington Road), to create additional space for the community.
- Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) – the draft business case was submitted to MHCLG on 15 January and feedback expected shortly. This will inform the submission of our final business case due with government on 30 April, with a decision expected over the summer.
- LCR Town Centre Fund – the council are working closely with New Ferry Community Land Trust (CLT) on a number of activities to enhance the appearance of the town centre. This includes the identification of a community asset, facilitating environmental improvements to the streetscene, to organising themed events.

## **2. BUSINESS**

### **Good Business Festival**

Council officers are working with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in support of The Good Business Festival. This week long, international event will take place in October to explore themes of sustainability and inclusive growth, which are now established as crucial measures of success for all businesses and organisations.

### **Wirral Business Support Service**

Wirral Chamber's contractual outputs continue to meet or exceed targets. Since the start of their contract in 2017, the Chamber has engaged 1,333 businesses, directly assisted 704 with growth support, and supported the creation of 213 new enterprises.

## **3. EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS**

### **The Wirral Ways to Work Programme**

This programme delivers 3 x Projects supporting residents to find employment or training. They are: Worklessness Support Project; Wirral ILM; Careers Advice. The Wirral Ways to Work Programme continues to perform ahead of target and has supported 6,548 participants since it started in April 2016, with 3,399 of these achieving either employment or training, which is a positive outcome rate of 51.9%.

### **Fair Employment Charter**

A pledge of the Metro Mayoral Manifesto was to establish a City Region Fair Employment Charter that recognises and celebrates businesses that promote social value by paying the Real Living Wage, minimising the use of 'zero hours' contracts, recognising and working with trades unions, procuring locally where possible, engaging with the social economy, providing quality apprenticeships, investing in their workforce and promoting gender equality."

This work is being taken forward through the CA via a reference group and internal delivery group. The consultation for the charter was scheduled to go live on 28 January 2020. There is an online consultation alongside a formal consultation that asks the public and key stakeholders several key and practical questions about how to deliver the charter. A two-tiered approach is proposed, with primary conditions established first and further conditions to be developed.

The launch of the Fair Employment Charter is currently planned to coincide with the Good Business Festival in October 2020.

### **Adult Education Budget**

In April 2019 the LCR Combined Authority agreed to accept a grant allocation of £51,380,231 from the Department for Education in respect of the devolved Adult Education Budget for the period 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020. £982,326 has been ring-fenced for the delivery of adult community learning provision for residents aged over 19 for the 2019/20 academic year. The CA continues activity to develop the Skills Investment Statement for 20/21 to underpin future AEB delivery for 20/21 academic year. The document has been reviewed by council officers and has also been shared with City Region Portfolio Holders and is now in the final stages before consultation with the CA in Q4 2019/20.